<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen D. Ricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel B. Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas M. Chabries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William J. Hamblin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald W. Parry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel C. Peterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel B. Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael D. Rhodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen D. Ricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melvin J. Thorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John W. Welch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel C. Peterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley S. Ricks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The opinions expressed in these reviews are the reviewers’. They do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies or its editors, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or of the reviewers’ employers. The reviews or any portion of them may not be used in advertising or for any other commercial purpose, without the express written permission of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Introduction .................................................................................................................. v

### First Presidency Statement on Modern-Language Editions of the Book of Mormon ........................................ 1

- Anderson, Lynn Matthews, *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon: A Learning Companion*
- Timothy B. Wilson, *Mormon's Story: An Adaptation Based on the Book of Mormon* (Camille S. Williams) ................................................................................................................. 3


- Ashment, Edward H., “The Use of Egyptian Magical Papyri to Authenticate the Book of Abraham: A Critical Review” (John Gee) ........................................................................................................ 19


- Charles, Melodie Moench, “Book of Mormon Christology” (Ross David Baron) .................................................................................................................................................................................. 91

- Fingerhut, Eugene R., *Explorers of Pre-Columbian America?: The Diffusionist-Inventionist Controversy*


- Hullinger, Robert N., *Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism* (Gary F. Novak) ......................................................................................................................................................................................... 139

- McKeever, Bill, and Eric Johnson, *Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend: Effective Ways to Challenge a Mormon’s Arguments without Being Offensive* (Lelise Jacobson) .................................................................................................................. 155
Metcalfe, Brent Lee, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity"
(Alan Goff) ........................................................................................................ 170

Nyman, Monte S., and Charles D. Tate, Jr., The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word
(Mack C. Stirling) .................................................................................................. 208

Sampson, Joe, Written by the Finger of God: Testimony of Joseph Smith's Translations
(John Gee) ........................................................................................................... 219

(Louis Midgley) ................................................................................................... 229

Toscano, Paul, The Sanctity of Dissent
(William J. Hamblin) ........................................................................................... 298

By Author ........................................................................................................... 317
By Title ............................................................................................................... 329
By Reviewer ...................................................................................................... 339
By Subject ........................................................................................................ 349

About the Reviewers ......................................................................................... 361
Editor’s Introduction: Of Implications

Daniel C. Peterson

It is the relentless quest of the present Review to recommend to its readers good books on the Book of Mormon and related subjects, and to critique and warn them against bad books. However, in the wide reading that we are obliged to do in the course of this quest, we occasionally run across interesting items that, being neither books nor of comparable length, fall outside the scope of the Review. Two such items, newspaper articles (of a sort), have recently been on my mind. In the spirit of service, therefore, I shall briefly summarize these two important pieces—pieces which, in my opinion, bear incalculable import not only for Mormonism but for the world at large.

In a very recent article, The Evangel, an anti-Mormon tabloid published in Marlow, Oklahoma, notes that the phrase and it came to pass occurs 1,297 times in the Book of Mormon, but only 65 times in the comparably sized King James New Testament. Even the very brief Pearl of Great Price, The Evangel observes, features the phrase 54 times. The clear implication is that “the author of the Bible,” whoever he might be, was very sparing with his use of it came to pass when compared with “the author” of two of the other Latter-day Saint sacred texts. “It would appear,” The Evangel concludes, “that the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price had the same author, and that this was not the author of the Bible. . . . The distinctively LDS scriptures bear the impress of one author, and the Bible shows evidence of another author entirely. This being the case, if the Bible is genuine Scripture, the other Standard Works cannot be.”

---

1 See “Editor’s Picks,” below.
2 Robert McKay, “‘It Came to Pass,’” The Evangel 42/1 (Winter 1995): 3. The Evangel is the flagship journal of Utah Missions, Inc., the Oklahoma-based anti-Mormon arm of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Home Missions Board. All quotations in this section come from Mr. McKay’s article; the idiosyncratic emphasis and capitalization and the ampersand in the title of the Doctrine and Covenants are his.
But the statisticians in Marlow have not carried their promising analysis far enough. *The Evangel* itself points out that "The Doctrine & Covenants doesn't use 'it came to pass' so frequently [as the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price do], only presenting the phrase five times." Wouldn't it therefore be logical to conclude, on the basis of *The Evangel*’s own method of authorship verification, that, whatever may be the case with regard to the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price, the author of the Doctrine and Covenants seems to be the same as that of the Bible? "This being the case," we might reason, "if the Bible is genuine scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants must also be." A highly significant conclusion, for which we should be grateful to our friends at *The Evangel*.

There is, moreover, further useful information to be derived from *The Evangel*’s statistical method—information that may force shocking changes to the traditional Protestant canon of scripture.

For, of course, there is no single "author of the Bible." As its very name implies—derived as it is from the Greek *ta biblia*, "the books"—the Bible is actually a library of different works in different genres, written by numerous authors at widely varying times. And the phrase *it came to pass*, with its variants, is very unevenly distributed within the King James Version. (For reasons of space and time, we shall confine ourselves to a survey of the New Testament.) *It came to pass* does not occur at all, for instance, in the books of 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Phillipians, and Colossians, nor in the epistles of 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. These New Testament books seem, thus, to have a pretty good chance of surviving into *The Evangel*’s scientifically revised Protestant canon. Indeed, in the last 111 chapters of the King James New Testament, the phrase "it came to pass" occurs only twice, for a gratifying and obviously divine average of only 0.018 occurrences per chapter. But what, by contrast, are we to make of the gospel of Luke, where the phrase can be found 48 times in a mere 24 chapters?3 (That yields, obviously, a neat two occur-

---

3 The other three gospels fare somewhat better—John does quite well, with a mere three occurrences of the damning phrase scattered over twenty-one chapters; Matthew has twenty-eight chapters and seven occurrences of the fateful words; Mark, rather ominously, has seven specimens in only 16 chapters. Acts has eighteen instances in its twenty-eight chapters.
references per chapter—over one hundred and eleven [111] times
the frequency we have just discovered in the latter part of the
New Testament!) “It would appear,” we might therefore con­
clude on the basis of *The Evangel*’s method, “that the author of
the gospel of Luke and the Book of Mormon was not the author
of the Doctrine and Covenants and the latter portion of the New
Testament . . . This being the case, if Philemon and Titus are
genuine scripture, the gospel of Luke cannot be.” On the other
hand, we may now have objective proof that the same person
who wrote the Doctrine and Covenants also wrote the epistles of
Paul, a proposition that will rock the discipline of biblical stud­
ies to its very foundations.

Manifestly, some of the deepest, most radical thinking now
being done anywhere on religious topics is to be found among
fundamentalist anti-Mormons. (Although, admittedly, for rea­
sons that remain unclear, they appear unwilling to make their
stunning conclusions fully explicit.) But the implications of their
revolutionary and creative speculation extend well beyond the
merely religious sphere, as the next example demonstrates
beyond any possibility of doubt:

In the “newspaper” that anti-Mormons passed out at the
Bountiful Temple open house, there appeared an article entitled
“If Mormonism Is Christian . . .”5 “If Mormons are Christians
as many claim to be,” contends the article, “then there are certain
doctrines that Christians clearly must teach.” This is true
enough. Even under the rules of traditional logic, a species must
share certain attributes with other members of its genus. Yet tra­
ditional logic, since the ancient Greeks, has always held that the
species within a genus, the sets within a class, can and indeed

---

One wants to know precisely where the dividing line is to be drawn between
scriptural and nonscriptural frequencies.

4 Most will no doubt identify Shakespeare as the author, while a
vocal minority will insist on the Earl of Oxford. At least we can rule out
Solomon Spaulding.

5 Coincidentally, this article too was written by Robert McKay. It
has proven to be an exceptionally popular piece of literature among funda­
mentalist anti-Mormons, having also appeared in materials distributed at the
open houses of the temples in San Diego and Orlando. Its original incarna­
tion seems to have been as Robert McKay, “If Mormons are Christians,”
*The Evangel* (May–June 1992): 1. Mr. McKay is described in the Bountiful
handout as “a researcher and associate editor at Utah Missions, headquartered
in Marlow, OK.”
must have characteristics peculiar to themselves, characteristics which they do not share with other members of the genus or class. Despite the fact, for instance, that blue whales are mammals and live in the ocean, skunks need not do the same in order also to be considered mammals. And blue whales need not frighten off enemies with disgusting odors in order to be considered mammals merely because one other type of mammal, the skunk, does precisely that. There are, yes, certain characteristics that they must share if they are both to be classified as mammals (characteristics lacked by, say, alligators), but they are free, beyond that, to be dramatically different. However, this is not allowed by the Bountiful article. For there then follows a list of nine uniquely Latter-day Saint beliefs, including the doctrines of divine anthropomorphism and eternal progression, the necessity of temple ordinances, and the scriptural status of the Book of Mormon.6 “I could go on,” declares the article’s author, “but I trust my point is made. Christians do not believe the items listed above! Yet all of these are part and parcel of Mormonism. Since Mormonism teaches doctrines not accepted by biblical Christianity [sic], it is clear that Mormonism is not Christian.”

In other words, certain fundamentalist anti-Mormons, stepping forward in their previously unsuspected role as avant-garde philosophers, have now collapsed the difference between genus and species, thereby overturning a logical principle that has been held and taught from at least the days of Aristotle: Since both species and genus (or set and subset) must share certain characteristics, these cutting-edge thinkers now reveal, species and genus must share all characteristics.7

The implications of this revolutionary logical discovery are innumerable. On the principle that any proper interpretation or instantiation of a valid logical form is itself valid, we can extend the Bountiful Formula to countless new subjects. In the following two reapplications of the argument—the first treating a

---

6 The list is not precisely accurate, and some of the items in it were obviously chosen more for their shock value than for their representativeness.

7 At least one stubborn defender of the logical status quo has vainly attempted—first in a letter dated 12 September 1992, and then during a 4 December 1994 radio-broadcast telephone conversation (“Religion on the Line,” 8:00–10:00 P.M., KTKK 630 AM, Salt Lake City)—to persuade the article’s author that the traditional distinction between genus and species ought to be retained.
religious topic, the second a secular one—I shall attempt to illustrate the radical insights this new form of logic now makes potentially available to humanity:

If Catholics are Christians, as many claim to be, then there are certain doctrines that Christians clearly must teach. For Catholics teach these doctrines, and, being Christians, would not teach them if they were not Christian doctrines. If Catholics are Christians, then Christians must believe:

* That the bishop of Rome, the pope, is the head of the Church and, properly, the head of all Christendom.
* That the pope is infallible when speaking ex cathedra.
* That priests should not marry.
* That members of the Church should regularly confess their sins to priests.
* That members of the Church should pray the rosary.
* That members of the Church should attend mass regularly, wherein the wine and the wafer become, in a mysterious way, the blood and body of Christ.
* That the saints can intercede with God.
* That Mary was assumed bodily into heaven.
* That tradition is an important source of Christian doctrine and practice alongside the Bible.

I could go on, but I trust that my point is made. Christians [e.g., Pentecostals and Quakers] do not believe these things. Yet all these are part and parcel of Catholicism. Since Catholics believe things that Christians do not believe, it is clear that Catholics are not Christians.8

Of course, logicians of the pedestrian and unimaginative type are likely to respond that the claim that “Christians” do not believe what Catholics believe merely smuggles into the premises of the argument the very conclusion that the argument supposedly seeks to discover—namely, that “Christians” and Catholics constitute two distinct, nonintersecting sets, with no

8 With the exception of slight punctuation improvements and the obvious alteration of subject matter, both of my paraphrases carefully follow the wording of the original 1992 *Evangel* article.
members in common. They will declare that the argument is therefore circular and invalid. (Ordinary logicians are so predictable!) They will also say—see if they don’t!—that the following argument is invalid because circular:

If American desert tortoises are reptiles, then there are certain attributes that reptiles clearly must possess. For tortoises possess these attributes, and, being reptiles, would not possess them if they were not reptile attributes. If tortoises are reptiles, then reptiles must have:

* Hard shells.
* Extraordinarily slow walking speed.
* A passion for lettuce and cantaloupe.
* Tiny, stubby little tails.
* A length of, at most, about eighteen inches.
* A tendency to hibernate for several months of each year.
* Thick, stumpy legs with dull claws on them.
* Great enthusiasm for digging holes.
* A preference for desert habitats.

I could go on, but I trust that my point is made. Reptiles [e.g., crocodiles and cobras] do not have these attributes. Yet all these are part and parcel of being a tortoise. Since tortoises have attributes that reptiles do not have, it is clear that tortoises are not reptiles.

There is, however, so much to be gained by persistent use of the Bountiful Formula! One can, simply by using this astonishing logical instrument, generate earth-shattering discoveries all day long. One might prove, for instance, that palm trees are not plants, that Republicans are not politicians, that English is not a language, that automobiles are not machines, or (most promising of all) that Protestant fundamentalists are not human. A whole new world lies before us.

Unfortunately, busied with our own stewardships and, perhaps, equipped only with more commonplace minds, we shall have to depend upon our anti-Mormon friends for further refinement of these amazing discoveries. In the meantime, a few words about the present issue of the Review:

* Camille Williams and Marvin Folsom offer somewhat differing opinions on modern-English versions of the Book of Mormon. In order to help our readers place in perspective the
issues they raise, we preface to the Williams and Folsom reviews a highly relevant statement from the First Presidency, whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

I would also like to express my own opinion on two issues suggested by these reviews. First, I am not certain that the "message" of scripture is entirely reducible to propositions that can be abstracted from its revealed language. Its complexity may well be part of its message, just as its parables are richer than any simplistic moral platitudes that one can deduce from them. This is one of the reasons that the scriptures are infinitely rereadable. Second, the fact that errors occur during the process of translating the scriptures into foreign languages even when this is done of necessity and under Church supervision does not seem to refute the claim that scriptures should not be translated, unnecessarily and without Church supervision, into more colloquial versions of their own language. Indeed, it could well be taken to argue for precisely the opposite position.

* The present issue contains two substantial reviews of items that were addressed already in Review 6/1. There will no doubt be some who, for whatever reasons, will see this as evidence of our obsession or our desperation. Not so. Neither piece was originally commissioned by the Review; both were already under way when they came to my attention. I found them interesting and opted to publish them. I reserve the right to do so again in the future, on these or other topics.

* The Review has itself developed into a rather lengthy book. Many of its essays, I hope, will be of considerable interest, but they cannot conveniently be used as guides by those who simply want to know what is best in recent publishing on the Book of Mormon and related subjects. I have therefore elected to append a short list, directly to this "Introduction," of the "Editor's Picks" from the present issue of the Review. I do this (somewhat subjectively, it is true) on the basis of my own prepublication acquaintance with the reviews and generally, though not always, with the books themselves.

I am grateful to those who have helped in the production of this issue of the Review. Brent Hall assisted in a number of ways, and Dr. Shirley S. Ricks played her customary indispensable role in preparing the volume for publication. Alison Coutts, Dr. Louis C. Midgley, and Dr. Melvin J. Thorne read and commented upon a number of the individual reviews (but should not be held accountable for my final editorial decisions).
Janet Hovorka and Rebecca Ricks created the indexes, which we hope will prove to be useful tools for students of the Book of Mormon and allied subjects. Most of all, I thank the reviewers, without whom we would have had nothing to edit, index, or publish.

Editor’s Picks

**** Outstanding, a seminal work of the kind that appears only rarely

*** Enthusiastically recommended

** Warmly recommended

* Recommended

Warren P. Aston and Michaela Knoth Aston. *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi’s Journey across Arabia to Bountiful*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994. A brief and rather personal summary of the authors’ extremely important research into the Arabian geography of 1 Nephi. (More scholarly treatments are to be found in the Astons’ papers, distributed by FARMS.) ***


Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. *The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young Univer-
sity, 1992. A mixed collection of articles drawn from a symposium held at Brigham Young University under the auspices of Religious Education. *
Modern-Language Editions of the Book of Mormon Discouraged

First Presidency Statement

We are pleased to announce that 4,855,167 copies of the Book of Mormon were sold during 1992. Of this number, 1,994,312 were in English, followed by 1,209,734 in Spanish. The remainder included translations in 36 other languages.

It is gratifying to note the ever-increasing distribution of this sacred scripture which has come to us as a voice speaking “out of the dust” declaring the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Isa. 29:4.) The power of its testimony and the persuasive beauty of its language have touched the hearts of millions around the world.

From time to time there are those who wish to rewrite the Book of Mormon into familiar or modern English. We discourage this type of publication and call attention to the fact that the Book of Mormon was translated “by the gift and power of God,” who has declared that “it is true.” (Book of Mormon title page; D&C 17:6.) The Prophet Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon was “the most correct of any book on earth.” (History of the Church, 4:461.) It contains “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” (D&C 20:9.)

When a sacred text is translated into another language or rewritten into more familiar language, there are substantial risks that this process may introduce doctrinal errors or obscure evidence of its ancient origin. To guard against these risks, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve give close personal supervision to the translation of scriptures from English into other languages and have not authorized efforts to express the doctrinal

---

1 This statement appeared in the Ensign (April 1993): 74.
content of the Book of Mormon in familiar or modern English. (These concerns do not pertain to publications by the Church for children, such as the Book of Mormon Reader.)

We counsel everyone to cultivate the influence of the scriptures by personal study of the word of the Lord contained therein. When this is done prayerfully, each who reads may know the truth of these sacred words by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moro. 10:5.)

Ezra Taft Benson
Gordon B. Hinckley
Thomas S. Monson


Reviewed by Camille S. Williams

Two simplified versions of the Book of Mormon are now available. Both Lynn Matthews Anderson and Timothy B. Wilson began paraphrasing scripture to help their respective children "read and understand the Book of Mormon [even] by themselves."¹ These adapters do not suggest that the Book of Mormon be replaced by simpler versions, but both feel that the "message"² of scripture can be "clarified"³ by modernizing the forms of verbs and pronouns, by using simple sentences, by deleting phrasing they consider extraneous or redundant, by substituting a simpler vocabulary, and by making referents and connectives more specific. They believe these simplified versions will help children and functionally illiterate adults gain a greater understanding and testimony of the sacred text. "For when a message is clear in one’s mind, the Spirit is unrestricted in witnessing of its truthfulness" (Wilson, afterword).⁴

*Mormon’s Story: An Adaptation Based on the Book of Mormon* places the simplified text in a column parallel to that of

² Ibid., 21.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Some might attribute that to the Spirit, rather than to the editor.
the authorized text, which appears in smaller print. The side-by-side format is intended to provide a “learn-by-comparison format, [so that] readers can familiarize themselves with the language of holy writ and its meaning” (Wilson, introduction). The bright jungle print cover is designed to appeal to children. Only large or stout children, however, will find this hefty volume easy to handle (the spine is 1 1/2 inches thick).

For the most part, Wilson uses the vocabulary of the Book of Mormon; he simplifies primarily by simplifying syntax. While the texts are in parallel columns, the paragraphs in Mormon’s Story do not correspond to verse divisions. He divides long complex sentences into short sentences and reduces the number of relative and subordinate clauses. He also repeats referents and deletes introductory interjections, binding conjunctions, and parenthetical phrases, such as behold, my beloved brethren, and now, wherefore, I say unto you, and that Latter-day Saint favorite, and it came to pass. Sometimes the deletions are striking, as in Alma 4:5. The Book of Mormon reads:

And it came to pass in the seventh year of the reign of the judges there were about three thousand five hundred souls that united themselves to the church of God and were baptized. And thus ended the seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and there was continual peace in all that time.

The same verse from Mormon’s Story reads:

85 B.C. was a year of peace, during which 3,500 souls were baptized into the church of God.

In the above case, the most significant portions missed by the paraphrase are that the converts actively united themselves to the church (as well as the passive-sounding were baptized) and that the judges were over the people of Nephi. In the paraphrasing of some other verses, however, it is arguable that the plain sense of

---

5 The 8 1/2 x 11-inch pages include column headings listing the range of verses on the page, e.g., 2 Nephi 4:11–20, and the content or topic of the verses, e.g., "Lehi’s last words. Nephi’s psalm . . ." (Wilson, 70).

6 For examples of these deletions, see 2 Nephi 31:14–32:6.
the passage is marred by the deletion of substantive material and the destruction of parallel syntax within the verse. In our day, we prize the concise sentence with active verbs as strong and direct. Intensification in scripture relies rather on expansion of the sentence through an accumulation of repetition and parallelism, as in 1 Nephi 17:30–31, which reads (bracketed phrases are portions deleted or changed by Wilson):

[And notwithstanding] they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, [leading them] by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient [for man to receive], they hardened their hearts [and blinded their minds], and [reviled] against Moses and [against the true and living] God.

And [it came to pass that according to] his word he did destroy them; and [according to] his word he did lead them; [and according to his word he did do all things for them; and there was not any thing done save it were by his word].

The two verses in Mormon’s Story read like this (added material is italicized):

After being led by the Lord their God, their Redeemer, who went before them by day, who gave them light by night, and did all things for them that they needed, they still hardened their hearts and rebelled against Moses and against God. And by the Lord’s word, He destroyed the children of Israel in their rebellion, or by His word, He led and nourished them in the wilderness.

Reviled becomes rebelled; nourished summarizes doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive; in their rebellion provides an explicit causal link for the destruction; in the wilderness is repeated from a previous verse. Wilson’s substitution of rebelled for reviled significantly changes the plain sense of the phrase and weakens the causal link he so carefully proposes in his paraphrase. In other passages, he arguably infuses more intensity; the relative strength of a statement is part of the message. Many
readers will find these changes disconcerting, but easily evaluated by checking the authorized text on the same page. It is puzzling, though, when a paraphrase adopts contemporary phrasing that is significantly different from the plain sense of the passage, as in Alma 5:26, where "if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, . . . can ye feel so now?" becomes "In the past, if you . . . have wanted to sing the song of redeeming love, how do you feel now?" Or notice the turn given Alma 5:6, in which "have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers?" becomes "have you completely forgotten your fathers’ captivity?" Not only is the sense significantly different, but the tie to the use of remembrance elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, and in other books of scripture, is lost.

Wilson marks the chronology of the books by adding the year the recorded incidents occurred or the year the record was written. For example, 1 Nephi 1:1 is preceded by the italicized year (600 B.C.); as is Words of Mormon 1 (385 A.D.). In Ether 1:1, historical information is inserted into the text: "Now I, Moroni, will begin engraving my account of those ancient people who lived for about 1,600 years in the northern lands before annihilating themselves." 7

Quotation marks are inserted (not always accurately) to aid the reader in distinguishing between the narrative of the scribe and the recorded speeches or conversations of the individuals in the account. For example, in Mosiah 12:20–24 the priests of King Noah ask Abinadi to interpret scripture. Double and single quotation marks are used to indicate the speech by the priests and the passage quoted from Isaiah. While the use of quotation marks may seem heavy-handed in a relatively short, direct interchange such as this, they serve as a discreet reminder to readers, some of whom may be reading only short passages, or sections of text out of sequence, to check to see who is being quoted. These are editorial decisions, of course; given the difference between writing what was said and directly quoting someone, the quotation marks should not be given undue authority.

7 Wilson uses annihilating themselves, and adds a paraphrase of Mormon 4:5: "The Lord allows the wicked to destroy the wicked." Ether 1:1 actually says that "those ancient inhabitants . . . were destroyed by the hand of the Lord."
On the whole, Wilson’s paraphrase leaves more of the Book of Mormon intact than does Lynn Matthews Anderson’s *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon*. In addition to the kinds of changes Wilson makes in the text, Matthews Anderson uses “simple, modern English [words] on approximately a fifth-grade reading level.” She includes a paraphrase of the title page (p. ix), a paraphrase of portions of the Joseph Smith–History (pp. 381–84), a paraphrase of the respective testimonies of the three witnesses and the eight witnesses (p. 385), a glossary (pp. 386–92), and an alphabetical listing of important stories and people (pp. 393–98). The design of the book is not as helpful as it might be. Her paraphrase is printed in double columns, with no column or page headings; chapter numbers are spelled out. She has revised selected passages to make them overtly gender inclusive by changing *brethren* to *brothers [and sisters]* but has deleted most of the earlier edition’s feminist commentary from the “To the Reader” section. Although Matthews Anderson’s years of work have resulted in a generally simple paraphrase of the Book of Mormon text, problems and inconsistencies remain.

Matthews Anderson feels that there is little “poetic or beautiful phraseology lost through updating and simplifying the Book of Mormon.” For this reason, in Nephi’s psalm (2 Nephi 4:16–30) the metaphorical and active *sorroweth*, *grieveth*, and *groaneth* are all rendered as *is very sad; I am encompassed about becomes I am full of sadness; why should . . . my soul linger in the valley of sorrow becomes why should . . . my soul be sad. In addition to the loss of metaphor, the rhythm of passages is marred and meaning is lost when she replaces *grieve and sorrow* with *sad.*

For words which have no easy equivalent she provides a glossary. For example, the glossary defines *resurrection* as “to rise from the dead; the time when one’s spirit is joined to an *immortal* body forever,” a competent definition when both clauses are

---

9 Ibid., 27.
10 She uses *groan* in 1 Nephi 19:12 and 3 Nephi 17:14, but not in 2 Nephi 4:19 or in 3 Nephi 8:23; 10:9.
11 *Grieve* can, of course, include the senses “to offend or provoke,” which Matthews Anderson ignores.
combined. The reader who sees these as two separate definitions might be inclined to see the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44) and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15) as instances of resurrection. Her use of easy equivalents is sometimes inconsistent, however. For example, Matthews Anderson uses resurrection and atonement in 2 Nephi 9:6-7, and also in Alma 42:23, but substitutes sacrifice for atonement and live again for resurrection in Jacob 4:11-12.

She defines witnesses as “people who see and hear things for themselves; people who tell others about the things they have seen and heard.” This is an informal sense of the word only, ignoring the link to religious and secular law that is heavily used in scripture. Matthews Anderson is comfortable using witness as a noun, but avoids using it as a verb, substituting see or show, as in her paraphrase of the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4 and 5.

Given the fact that many of her readers will already be participants in Latter-day Saint practices of worship, her paraphrase of the sacrament prayers is surprising (Wilson does not paraphrase those prayers). One of the ways the language of worship is learned is through repeated exposure to it in all the books of scripture, in Church meetings, in the singing of hymns, and in the performance of ordinances, including temple ordinances. Not all of us will study the usage of words in scripture and Latter-day Saint practice, but all of us learn the senses, the connections, and connotations of our religious vocabulary from our exposure to it throughout our lives. To destroy the phrasal and conceptual links between the Book of Mormon, other books of scripture, and Latter-day Saint practice seems a net loss for everyone.

In her paraphrase of the sacrament prayers Matthews Anderson substitutes make holy for sanctify; eat for partake; want to be called by for willing to take upon them; in memory for in remembrance; sacrificed for shed; and show for witness. In general, the paraphrase uses words with senses more passive than those in the text, all of which require significant activity on the part of those participating in the covenant. Throughout the scriptures and in our ordinances these words are used in reference to the fall, covenants with God, the atonement, and exaltation.

For example, the Lord commanded Moses in Exodus 13:2: “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn” (as Christ was firstborn and
Hebrews 13:12 uses that word to describe Jesus’ sacrifice to sanctify his people with his own blood. Moses 6:59–62 links blood, water, and spirit with the creation, the fall, the atonement, and exaltation.

The word partake (in various forms) is used by Lehi (2 Nephi 2), Nephi (2 Nephi 26), and Alma (Alma 12) in their discourses on the fall, atonement, and resurrection;12 Christ himself uses that word concerning his work in our behalf (D&C 19:19). Take upon is a set phrase used throughout scripture; it is used specifically to describe Christ’s taking upon himself flesh and blood,13 his taking upon himself our sins and afflictions,14 and believers being baptized and taking upon themselves his name.15 In remembrance is a set phrase used by Christ in connection with the sacrament;16 Christ also used shed17 and witness18 when explaining the meaning of the ordinance of the sacrament. Given the breadth of the use of these words, and their symbolic and doctrinal depth, it seems that in this case, at least, to paraphrase is to limit severely for the reader the experience of participating in the ordinance. The paraphrase provides minimal comprehension, but prevents maximum understanding.

These books are hard for me to read, particularly the Matthews Anderson version. This is, in part, a philosophical disagreement. I do not believe that the scriptures comprise a body of information which we are to decode, process, and pray about; nor do I agree that these adaptations, even if made in good faith, will be “instrument[s] to help make those true messages clear in the mind of the reader, the place where all testimonies begin”

13 See, for example, Mosiah 7:27; Ether 3:9.
14 See, for example, Mosiah 7:11–12; Alma 7:13; 11:40; 34:8; compare the use of bear in Isaiah 53.
15 See, for example, 2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 5:8; 25:23; Alma 34:38; 46:18–21; 3 Nephi 27:5; Mormon 8:38; D&C 18:21–28; 20:37, 77; compare variations of the theme in Matthew 28:12; Abraham 1:18.
17 3 Nephi 18:11; D&C 27:2.
18 3 Nephi 18:10–11.
(Wilson, afterword). Nor do I think that testimonies are built primarily by solitary souls reading controlled vocabulary texts.

Surely there is much to learn from the scriptures, but the kind of learning to be done is qualitatively different from the technical writer's task of stripping ambiguity from a set of directions for programming a VCR.

Which of us with a testimony borne of the spirit can explain clearly and simply how the atonement works, or how it is that light and life reside in any of us? Nevertheless, we can with our limited understanding receive a witness that there is an atonement, and that Christ is the Light and the Life of the World. Even the adapters are helpless to simplify this most metaphorical, most basic Christian message.  

Before we move to simplifying our language of worship, we might try immersing ourselves and our children in it in order to learn it. Scripture records God's dealings with his people and invites us to be a part of the familial conversation. We learn what it means to live with the scriptures in our hearts by reading together as families and by listening to the living prophets. Much of what we learn is less informational than it is experiential: we do not learn from the scriptures the definitions of repentance, forgiveness, hardheartedness, or joy; by the spirit we begin to feel

19 Neither Wilson nor Matthews Anderson paraphrases light and life in Alma 38:9; 3 Nephi 9:18; 11:11; or Ether 4:12. But the phrase joy because of the light of Christ unio life in Alma 28:14 is paraphrased by Wilson as joy for those who live in Christ's light, and by Matthews Anderson as happiness because of Christ's light, which brings people to eternal life.  

20 My first testimony of scripture came at Sunday dinner after church, listening to my father and grandfather quote scripture as a natural part of the discussion. My father's voice is unforgettably direct:

But whom say ye that I am?  
And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.  
And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 16:15-17)

The printed word on the page—the flesh and blood of scripture—must be animated by the spirit speaking to the reader/speaker/hearer.
repentant, forgiving.\textsuperscript{21} We feel to shrink from our own hardheartedness or to rejoice as we feel to sing the song of redeeming love. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, wives and husbands ought to be sharing these experiences with each other; we ought not find ways to separate the young or the unlearned from the language of the body of the church.

At the very least, we should take heed of the experience of those churches which have in this century revised the language of their sacred texts. Protestants and Catholics who began simplifying the Bible five decades ago are now lamenting that “Most Christians under thirty no longer have in common a reservoir of biblical texts recognized by all, and are likely unable to recognize the biblical allusions woven throughout English literary history.”\textsuperscript{22}

We who have four volumes of scripture—each with a somewhat different language—do face a considerable responsibility in learning the language of those texts.

These paraphrases lose imagery that is present in all the scriptures; they drop some phrases and clauses altogether. These authors, by virtue of retaining some religious vocabulary, have produced works in which the register ranges from the most formal to the colloquial. Learning these artificial languages may be a harder task than learning the actual language of the scriptures.

In an age of irreverence, I am loath to see us lose a language worthy of the God we worship. This is not to say I think God is a snob who won’t listen to a prayer if addressed as \textit{you}. But neither do I think we lack the capacity to augment the language of our own place and time: the language of scripture can be learned as another dialect of English. Further, I think that there are times when we long for a language better than our everyday usage. I notice this particularly with young fathers blessing their babies. Some falter between \textit{thou} and \textit{you}, veering between directly addressing God and directly addressing the child (in addition to referring to the child’s parents in the third person). The ordinances of the gospel do not belong to us individually. They link

\textsuperscript{21} For a discussion of this view, see Arthur H. King’s analysis of the parable of the father and his two sons in \textit{The Abundance of the Heart} (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 116–17, 166–67, 179.

us with all who have gone before us and all who will come after us. We need a language that will keep our focus on that unending familial relationship. We have that language in scripture, in temple and other ordinances, in our hymns, and to some extent in our prayers.

I think it wise to be wary of tinkering with the language given us in modern scripture. I exclaim with Matthews Anderson:

O, the tricky plan of the evil one! O, the weakness and foolishness of people! When they are educated, they think they are wise, and they do not listen to what God says, because they think they know more than he does. (2 Nephi 9:28)

Reviewed by Marvin Folsom

Beginning at least as early as 1939, attempts have been made to help the unsophisticated reader understand the Book of Mormon. Genet Bingham Dee’s *A Voice from the Dust* (1939)\(^1\) contained the original text, except for the phrase *and it came to pass* and the Isaiah passages, but the text was arranged in chronological order, had single, page-wide columns without verse numbers, and had added enrichment material. The RLDS edition of the Book of Mormon (1966), in addition to chapters and versification according to the 1837 edition and added punctuation, basically kept the original text except for modernizing most *thou*-forms and omitting the word *yea* and the phrase *it came to pass*. The series *Illustrated Stories from the Book of Mormon* (1967–72)\(^2\) tells the story of the Book of Mormon with some additions (besides the illustrations) and some omissions. It is not a verse-by-verse rendition, but archaisms have been modernized. The complete original text of the Book of Mormon is in the appendix. Max Skousen (1991)\(^3\) provided parallel columns with the original and modern language texts of his own translation side by side, but he abridged some sections and omitted Isaiah and other material. In 1991, the New

---


World Press of Midland, Texas, published *The Bible II*. Of course, the name has changed, the title page and testimonies of the witnesses are absent, and there is no mention of the translator. The text is the 1981 Latter-day Saint edition of the Book of Mormon (corrected 1983) except that some of the King James language has been replaced with modern equivalents (*yea, thou, thee, thy, thine, and thou*-forms of the verbs). With the private publication of *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon*, there is now available for the first time a *complete* text of the Book of Mormon in the same verse-by-verse order as the current Latter-day Saint edition, in easy-to-read language throughout. And the book is offered at a reasonable price. The modernization of the language is not superficial or cosmetic as with the editions mentioned above, but, except as noted below, is thoroughgoing.

For example, when we examine the language in EBOM (=*Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon*) with a text-retrieval program (WordCruncher), we find none of the following (remember that a text-retrieval program accounts for *every individual word*): *and it came to pass, verily, thou, thee, thy, thine, ye, yea, verb forms ending in -eth, brethren, somewhat, whatsoever, testify, bear record, treasure, abominable, rejoic-, Lord Omnipotent, Lamb of God, life eternal, numberless, ceas-, wrath, sore (adverb), slay, smite, doctrine, disputation, suppose, exceeding(ly), whore, strait, disputation, frightened.*

On the other hand, EBOM uses the following words not found in the traditional text of the Book of Mormon: *sadness, overcoat, scared, countless, bully, canal, divorce papers, (un)educated, false gods, fortune-tellers, rape, scar, sexual sins, slave-drivers, symbol, thresh, someday, whales, money room, orchard.*

The absence of archaic and hebraizing language is the feature in EBOM most likely to be criticized and is one of the two men-

---

4 *Bible II* (Midland, TX: New World Press, 1991).
6 I made my own WordCruncher version. There was an earlier electronic version available, but changes have been made since that version. Electronic and audio versions are being considered but are not yet available.
tioned in the statement issued by the Church. Out of necessity or possibly out of our insecurity, we Mormons have, over the years, been inordinately preoccupied with proving the authenticity of the Book of Mormon by going on at great length about textual, linguistic, historical, cultural, and geographical matters (“evidence of its ancient origin”), rather than concentrating on the spiritual message of the book. We would rather burden ourselves with archaic language in order to retain some linguistic proofs than make the message understandable but lacking some external proofs. We confuse the text with the message. We do not differentiate between man’s language and God’s word. We fail to recognize that God’s word can be expressed even in modern English. The nature of God’s message to people on the earth is such that the essentials of salvation can be learned from any translation that is read prayerfully so that the reader can be influenced by the spirit. Nevertheless, those essentials are more easily grasped in some translations than in others, at least by some people. Translations with an extensive overlay of linguistic and other baggage make it very difficult for the unsophisticated reader to penetrate the encrustation and get to the more important message. Even though King James language is a related but archaic form of English, there are many who do not understand it and need a more modern text if they are to grasp the meaning of the Bible.

The second objection in the statement by the Church relates to correctness of doctrine. The statement notes that the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith “by the gift and power of God; . . . it is the most correct of any book on earth, and . . . it contains the fulness of the gospel.” There is no reason, however, why these attributes cannot be expressed in different words and in different languages. The Church feels there are “substantial risks that this process may introduce doctrinal errors.” The translators of the LXX, the Vulgate, and the KJV all took that risk because being able to read and understand the text in their own language was paramount. Church translators must do the same each time the

---

Book of Mormon is translated into a foreign language. In our day, we not only have technology to assist in controlling the accuracy of the text, but more importantly we have the advantage of living prophets who can insure that no doctrinal errors are introduced. The ideal but more expensive format (side-by-side parallel columns: what a literacy project tool!) would point up any doctrinal errors and would also clarify some more difficult passages as well.

More and more, the publication and distribution of the text will be beyond the control of the Church. Others will publish it in various forms either to make money or facilitate understanding or both. (For $13, you can get a CD with “all popular New and Old Testament versions, Book of Mormon, Talmud portions . . .”)

For the next edition of *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon*, I recommend the following improvements:

1. Render not only verse for verse, but within each verse, render phrase for phrase without deleting text if that text can be rendered in modern language. At the end of this section I have made some suggestions for some of the omitted portions [in brackets] in the left-hand column.

   Example:

   1 Nephi 2:11–13 [Now] this he spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel; [for behold] they did murmur [in many things] against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave [the land of their inheritance], and their gold, EBOM: He said this to Laman and Lemuel because they were stubborn. They complained about their father. They said he had taken them away from Jerusalem and left behind their gold and silver and riches, and that they would die in the desert

---

8 Close supervision did not prevent a blatant error from occurring in the German Book of Mormon. The English original of Mosiah 2:17 states, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.” However, the German 1980 translation reads: “Wenn ihr euren Mitmenschen dienet, allein dann dienet ihr eurem Gott,” which, when retranslated into English, means, “It is only when you are serving your fellowmen, that you are serving your God.”

9 #326 Bibles and Religion (DOS) in CD catalog from Most Significant Bits, Inc. (MSB).
and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart.

[And thus] Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. [And they did murmur] because they knew not [the dealings of that] God who had created them.

[Neither] did they believe that Jerusalem, [that great city] could be destroyed according to the word of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father.

Suggestions for dealing with some of the omissions above:
in many things = a lot
the land of their inheritance = their land
because of the foolish imaginations of his heart = because of his stupid and senseless notions
and they did murmur = they did this
the dealings of that God = how God treats those he has created
neither = . . . also
Jerusalem, that great city = the great city of Jerusalem

2. The title Lamb of God of the original should be retained and not rendered as Son of God. The word gentile has been retained because there is no useful equivalent. The word harlot is also used (five times), although other modern Bible translations use immoral woman. It seems to me that the connection to the symbolism of the Old Testament and the infinite, atoning sacrifice would require that the word lamb be used in an easy-to-read Book of Mormon. The use of the word is widespread (Mary had a little one, though not the kind sold in the meat department). It should
not require too much on the part of even an unsophisticated reader to learn the symbolism of sacrifice connected with this very important title.

3. Find one or more useful equivalents for the phrase *verily* (verily) *I say unto you*, such as: *I solemnly assure you, I can guarantee [this truth], I promise you, I tell you in all earnestness, believe me, I tell you most solemnly, I tell you for certain, remember this.* Without it, the text lacks an important affective attribute.

4. Replace the things *(that)* with *what*: 1 Nephi 1:19 EBOM He also told them about *the things (=what) he saw and heard and about the things (=what) he read in the book.

The editor has very carefully thought through and discussed at length the advantages and disadvantages of a Book of Mormon in simple English. Those interested in these issues will find it interesting reading and come to appreciate some of the decisions that have to be made and the tremendous amount of work that goes into a project of this kind.

The editor and the publisher are to be commended for the long, concerted effort required to publish an easy-to-read version of the Book of Mormon, especially amid recent controversy. I readily think of the adolescent, the second-language learner, those in literacy programs, and those with unsophisticated reading skills, who are likely to benefit most from an easy-to-read Book of Mormon, but anyone who deals at all extensively with this text will gain insight and understanding because it is fresh and expresses the message directly and clearly.

---

Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob

Reviewed by John Gee

The discovery of almost any new historical evidence that challenges ingrained ideas about a given historical event or time period creates controversy because the new evidence is vigorously resisted in certain quarters. Thus the discovery of the name Abraham among Egyptian documents recently excavated in the library stacks followed a familiar pattern: (1) The initial discovery was made by an outsider to the field who only reported it to researchers in the field after a delay. (2) Then active researchers in the field began investigating the find and doing a more systematic excavation. This was accompanied by preliminary public reports that might have appeared to have had a sensational flavor (even when the researchers tried to be cautious). (3) These were followed by attacks on the evidence and those involved in the research. (4) Ideally, these attacks will eventually be followed by a fuller synthesized picture of the evidence in its historical context. The work under review illustrates the third step of the process and would seem to be a reaction to some perceived sensationalism in the initial reports. While we should welcome any correction of flaws in the scholarly argument, the author, Edward H. Ashment, has continually been noted for his confused, confusing, and occasionally incoherent presentations,¹ a trend continued in the

¹ The following abbreviations are used in this review:
CDME for Raymond O. Faulkner, Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1961)

EDG for Wolja Erichsen, Demotisches Glossar (Kopenhagen: Munksgaard, 1954)

JEA for Journal of Egyptian Archaeology


PDM Papyri Demoticae Magicae, the demotic portions of the PGM


RBBM for Review of Books on the Book of Mormon


ZAS for Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde; ZPE for Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

I would like to thank Joseph and Erin Gee, Bill Hamblin, Louis Midgley, Karen Nelson, Dan Peterson, Matt Roper, and Michael Rhodes for their comments on various parts of the manuscript in various stages, Robert Ritner for his comments on an earlier incarnation of one section as well as general guidance and support on various topics, William Brashier, David Johnson, David Cameron, and Michael Rhodes for each adding a reference to my list of mentions of the name Abraham (none of these references came in response to the request through Insights), Stephen Ricks and Davis Bitton for insisting that I do this review, and finally Dan Peterson for providing a place for it to be published. None of these individuals should be held responsible for any of the errors or opinions in this review essay.

present work. In this endeavor he has been preceded by the dedicated anti-Mormons Jerald and Sandra Tanner, who excel Ashment only in the honesty with which they admit their agenda, and their willingness to concede that the evidence does actually say what has been claimed. Unfortunately, Ashment’s and the Tanners’ discussions of the evidence are preoccupied with mind-reading and characterized by muddled thinking. But since they are not particularly adept in the theory and practice of magic, and emphatically reject notions of divine revelation in modern times, they fail miserably as mind-readers. Every time they state what the author they are attacking had in mind (and I have this on impeccable authority), they get it wrong (more on this later).

Preliminary reports in periodicals aimed at a popular audience are generally too short to cover background information and issues. This review essay will, it is hoped, cover those background issues and move into the next stage of the process, providing a synthesis of the available information as well as correcting some of the misinformation circulated by a few more zealous than knowledgeable.

Ashment and the Tanners show a large amount of confusion on at least four fundamental theoretical issues that makes their

---


3 I will defer presentation of the evidence for this claim to a later place, partly because it serves no purpose here, partly because there are more important issues to discuss, and partly because “there is nothing more tedious than the spectacle of disgruntled authors complaining that they have been misrepresented or, even worse, whimpering that they have been ‘misunderstood.’ Academic authors, above all others, should be immunized from such concerns, after years of seeing the versions of our lectures we get back in blue books at the end of the term”; Peter Novick, “My Correct View on Everything,” American Historical Review 96/3 (June 1991): 699.
work unintelligible and thus an unreliable guide to the evidence they wish to discuss: (1) the nature of the arguments made in the preliminary reports they are trying to respond to, (2) the nature of the papyrus documents in question, (3) the definition of the term *magic*, and (4) the relationship between the papyri and the book of Abraham.

**Missing the Point**

Both the Tanners and Ashment take the two short articles that initially reported the finds as attempts at apologetics. But the titles of the articles—“References to Abraham Found in Two Egyptian Texts”\(^4\) and “Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts”\(^5\)—are apt summaries of their arguments: The first was to alert researchers to the discovery of the name *Abraham* in two Egyptian papyri; the second was to discuss for a Latter-day Saint audience some of the occurrences of the name *Abraham* in some Egyptian papyri. Since the object of the second article was to explain these references to Latter-day Saints and not Egyptologists, papyrologists, or secularists, some of the arguments, explanations, and terms were peculiar to that intended audience. The arguments also do not take into account information published after November 1991. Ashment, by the very title of his work, seems to consider these articles as “The Use of Egyptian Magical Papyri to Authenticate the Book of Abraham.” The Tanners, too, claim that this was an attempt to prove the book of Abraham true, and then contend that the articles undercut that argument.\(^6\) But Ashment and the Tanners show a fundamental misunderstanding of the issues involved, not only in the articles in question, but in the processes by which documents are tested. Tests for authenticity do not return a verdict of authentic or inauthentic, or even a range of authentic, inauthentic, undetermined, but only a result of inauthentic or indeterminate. A single test for the authenticity of a


document usually cannot decide the question in and of itself.\(^7\)

The papyri references were used in the articles as evidence, not for the authentication of the book of Abraham, but for the falsification of a particular anti-Mormon theory.\(^8\) Since “the method of science is . . . to look for facts which may refute a theory,” attempts to disprove a theory “confirm the theory only if they are the results of unsuccessful attempts to overthrow its predictions, and therefore a telling testimony in its favor.”\(^9\) In this case, the evidence refutes two hypotheses that have been put forward. The first is that Egyptian papyri “have nothing to do with any scripture written by Abraham,”\(^10\) which quickly degenerates into statements that the name Abraham never appears in Egyptian writing. The second is that it disproves the hypothesis that “if additional fragments of papyrus from the Theban tombs should be acquired, they would most likely be more of the Egyptian type of funerary documents that are consistently found in burials.”\(^11\)

The stance was and is that these references to Abraham in the papyri do not—indeed cannot in themselves—prove the book of


\(^8\) This sort of misunderstanding is encountered in the anti-Mormon treatment of Dee Jay Nelson: Wesley Walters, review of Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, in Journal of Pastoral Practice 5/4 (1982): 116–20; Charles M. Larson, By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 199–226; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Can the Browns Save Joseph Smith? (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1981). Dee Jay Nelson was a huckster who fooled both Mormon and anti-Mormon alike, though he did not fool the Egyptologists; see Dieter Mueller, in Annual Egyptological Bibliography 1968 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 169–70. This does not necessarily mean that all his work is wrong (although much of it is), but it does mean that it is not trustworthy.


\(^11\) Harris, Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, 88.
Abraham authentic. It was argued specifically that "the only real proof of scripture can come only through the power of the Holy Ghost (see Moro. 10:3–5; D&C 50:17–23)." The logical extension of this position is that for someone who accepts only empirical evidence there can be no real proof of scripture. Egyptology is an empirical discipline and thus can never really prove what to Latter-day Saints are the most important parts of the book of Abraham. (What sort of empirical or archaeological evidence would be left if God talked with Abraham—or with Joseph Smith for that matter?)

Can Egyptology disprove the book of Abraham? Since the general Latter-day Saint position on scripture is that it is historically based in events that happened in the empirical world, one would think that an empirical discipline might be able to shed light on scriptural events. In theory this may be true, but in practice it is not. The preservation of the physical remains of the past is haphazard at best and constantly deteriorating. If all of the written records from all periods of Egypt’s history had been somehow miraculously preserved and someone could actually sift through all of them in one lifetime, could we not tell whether Abraham visited Egypt and what he did there? Even this hypothetical proposition is doubtful. What we know of the names and personalities and historical events of ancient Egypt is completely dependent upon the sporadic, fragmentary, and often frustratingly elliptical records preserved by the less than one percent of the

12 Gee, "Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts," 60, emphasis added.
population that was literate.\textsuperscript{14} What sort of archaeological evidence would we expect to find for the visit of a single particular Asiatic household to Egypt for a while somewhere between 3500–4000 years ago? Where would we find it? How would we know how to recognize it? If we fail to find something we neither know how nor have ever bothered to look for, and which probably has not been preserved anyway, what is that supposed to prove? Arguments from silence in this field are extremely suspect.\textsuperscript{15}

But beyond fallacies of negative proof, Latter-day Saints have, for good reasons, never felt bound by certain currently accepted results of Egyptology. "As everyone knows, Egyptology is a 'discipline,' " writes Antonio Loprieno, "and not a 'science.' "\textsuperscript{16} Though Egyptology may not be a hard science, it is an empirical and historical discipline that has tried to model itself on the hard sciences, and has always seen itself as such. Egyptology, as a discipline, developed mostly at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present century and has followed the lead of the discipline of history during the same time in the adoption of "scientific imagery, and the assumption of the mantle of science."\textsuperscript{17} Thus Sir Alan Gardiner described "pre-Napoleonic

\textsuperscript{14} John Baines and Christopher J. Eyre, "Four Notes on Literacy," \textit{Göttinger Miszellen} 61 (1983): 65–72; John Baines, "Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society," \textit{Man} 18 (1983): 584–86; Robert K. Ritner, \textit{The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice} (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1993), 204 and n. 948. It should be emphasized that this figure is based on pure guesswork. First the population in the Old Kingdom is approximated according to the theoretical population that the estimated arable land could support based on flood levels and irrigation techniques known to have been in use at the time. The level of literate people is guessed by the number of individuals who could afford tombs, to which is added a guess of the number of professional scribes. The percentage is a ratio between the estimate and the guess, rounded up.


\textsuperscript{17} The American history profession’s assumption of the mantle is detailed in Peter Novick, \textit{That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the Ameri-
Egyptology” as “yet wholly uncritical and unscientific;”18 but Egyptian archaeology of the last century he described as “scientific excavation,” using “scientific standards,”19 while Egyptian philology had “a scientific grammar,” and therefore he considered Egyptology to be a “growing science.”20 “This, then, was the model of scientific method which, in principle, the historians embraced. Science must be rigidly factual and empirical, shunning hypothesis; the scientific venture was scrupulously neutral on larger questions of end and meaning; and, if systematically pursued, it might ultimately produce a comprehensive, ‘definitive’ history.”21 Notwithstanding Loprieno’s assertion of Egyptology as a discipline, he thinks that “Egyptology is doomed (whether consciously or unconsciously) to borrow theoretical settings from ‘systematic’ sciences.”22 Unlike the American history profession,23 Egyptology has only recently begun to feel the impact of Thomas Kuhn’s work on the hard sciences. Loprieno thus talks about “Egyptology [being] no exception” to trends “characteristic of modern scientific discourse altogether, in so-called exact sciences as well as in so-called humanities,” dealing “with the progressive switch in the focus of scholarly concern from the need to preserve and submit to investigation the individual documents of the past . . . to the interests for the paradigms (in Kuhn’s sense) on the basis of which we analyse and eventually classify these documents scientifically.”24 Such issues have not been integrated into the mainstream in Egyptology because a significant proportion of Egyptologists cannot penetrate the “undisciplined use of

18 Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 11-12.
19 Ibid., 15-16.
20 Ibid., 16.
21 Novick, That Noble Dream, 37.
22 Loprieno, “Book Reviews Once More,” 40. Historically, Loprieno’s statement has not been true. W. M. Flinders Petrie’s archaeological digs served as a bellwether in archaeology, where other disciplines borrowed and adapted the methods of Egyptian archaeology. More pertinent to our topic, it is Egyptologists, specifically the Demoticists, who have been in the forefront of understanding the so-called magical papyri.
23 Novick, That Noble Dream, 524-37.
language and [the] ill-defined terminology" of Loprieno and his fellows sufficiently to figure out what the fuss is all about. 25 The discipline nevertheless still usually views itself as a science. 26 To the extent that Egyptology is a science, it falls under the able critique of physicist and historian Erich Robert Paul: “Properly conceived, science is not, and should never become, an intellectual partner of theology—including Mormon theology. Looking at the same concern from the religious side, one can say that genuine faith can only be sustained outside the dimensions of historical and scientific evidence.” 27 Thus though we are grateful for any incidental confirming details—such as the appearance of the name Olishem (Abraham 1:10) in ancient historical documents 28—Mormons do not ultimately rest their faith on scraps of historical


26 With statements like the following from Loprieno, “Book Reviews Once More,” 40—“What every scholar of Egyptian grammar as well as of any other area of Egyptological research does [is] to verify critically the validity of grammatical ‘theories’ or concepts”—one wonders if he has understood the debate in the philosophy of science in the last century, including the work of Kuhn or more especially Popper, or if he is simply following “one of the many common misreadings of the work of Thomas Kuhn” (Novick, That Noble Dream, 431), since Loprieno’s statement betrays a theory of science from the last century—a theory shared by Ashment. See the discussion in Novick, That Noble Dream, 533–34.


data unearthed by scholars or by the sometimes fanciful reconstructions of historians, but on Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

The evidence brought forth in the two articles was briefly mentioned and not fashioned into an historical argument. It would seem, though, that Ashment and the Tanners have not understood this point. They have the idea that, since the author of the articles believes the book of Abraham is authentic, and since he published evidence that refuted certain anti-Mormon claims connected with the book of Abraham, the work must be apologetic. They have, thereby, misconstrued the arguments of the articles. Since these arguments seem to cause such problems, I will summarize them below:

I. The name Abraham appears on Egyptian papyri.
   A. The name Abraham on the papyri discussed is that of the biblical Abraham.
      1. One of these occurrences of the name is connected with a lion couch scene.
      2. Another of these occurrences is plausibly linked to hypocephali. (Facsimile 2 of the book of Abraham is a hypocephalus.)
   II. Figure 3 in Facsimile 1 of the book of Abraham is a priest. (This was not a major argument in either of the articles in question but was implied in the second one.)

The details of supporting arguments or explanations are not necessarily sacrosanct. For example, it would seem that the identification and explanation of the appearance of the god "Balsamos" in P. Leiden I 374 that was given in the Ensign article is completely irrelevant since it appears that that particular name resulted from a misreading of the papyrus. If the major argument is correct, however, the details can be refined through further research without drastically affecting the major argument; on the other hand, if the major argument is wrong no amount of correctness in the details can save it. Ashment and the

---

31 For example, no one seems to think, because the Tanners have made mistakes in their hieratic, that their arguments are invalid.
Tanners have only mixed results on the details—the more irrelevant the detail, the more likely they are to be correct—but Ashment, particularly, has taken an indefensible position relating to the major argument.

Out of the Mainstream

The fundamental issue is whether or not the name Abraham appears in Egyptian papyri. To this the answer is without question in the affirmative. The article in the Ensign listed six examples;\(^{32}\) many other references could have been given.\(^{33}\) From reading Ashment’s booklet, on the other hand, one might receive the impression that the author of the Ensign article saw the name Abraham where it does not actually exist.\(^{34}\) This is clearly not the case, since no scholar who seriously works with these papyri doubts the existence in them of the name Abraham.\(^{35}\) So confi-

\(^{32}\) Gee, “Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts,” 60–62. The texts cited were PGM V.460–80; PDM xii.6–20; PGM XII.270–321, PGM XII.474–95 + PDM xii.135–64; PDM xiv.228–29; PGM XXXVI.295–310. Due to some confusion in the editing process, one of these references was inadvertently omitted from the published version.

\(^{33}\) For example, PGM I.219; IV.2209; VII.315; VIII.8; XIII.778, 817, 976; XXIib.6; XXXV.14; 2a.7; 21.31; PGM Suppl. 2.6; 29:18; 75:21; 88:11.

\(^{34}\) There are actual examples of this; see, for example, Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltonini, eds., Supplementum Magicum, 2 vols (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–92), 1:51; 2:208. Please note that, unlike Ashment, these scholars do not deny the presence of the name “Abraham” on principle, but show that in two specific instances the examination of the traces proves that what another scholar had read as Abraham is really something else.

dent are scholars that the name does occur in these papyri, that they are willing to restore it into lacunae in the papyri. That the name refers to the biblical Abraham is both undisputed and indisputable when the papyrus mentions "Abraham, Isaac, and


36 Charlesworth, "Prayer of Jacob," 720; Daniel and Maltomini, eds., Supplementum Magicum, 2:137, 141; Theodor Hopfner, "Ein neuer griechischer Zauberpapyrus (Pap. Wessely Pragens. Graec. No. 1)," Archiv Orientālii 7/3 (1935): 356–57; Roy Kotansky, "PGM CV.1–15," in Betz, ed., Greek Magical Papyri, 310. Of the restorations cited, the last, by Kotansky, seems to me doubtful; it is a possibility, but no more than that since it does not meet the criteria outlined in Dow, Conventions in Editing, 20–31.
Jacob."  

Nor is Abraham the only biblical figure to appear in the papyri, since the names Isaac, Jacob, Solomon, Eve, Seth, and Moses also appear. The name Moses even appears in a demotic papyrus where, in a lamp divination text (an Egyptian technique for receiving revelation), the supplicant requests the god to "reveal thyself to me here today in the type of form of revealing thyself to Moses which thou didst on the mountain upon which thou createdest the darkness and the light."  

Further corroboration of the use of the name Abraham by ancient pagan Egyptians is provided by a decidedly unsympathetic ancient author. The Egyptian Christian Origen, writing in the early third century, reported that "many of those who call upon the divine powers use 'the God of Abraham' in their speeches, even feigning friendship with God's righteous one through the name because they mention the words 'the God of  

---

37 PGM XIII.976; XXXV.14; Daniel and Maltomini, eds., Supplementum Magicum, 1:79, 82; 2:188, 190; Delatte and Derchain, Les initiales magiques gréco-égpytiennes, 34.  
39 PGM XIII.317, 976; XXIIb.1, 26; XXV.14; XXXV.14; Daniel and Maltomini, eds., Supplementum Magicum, 1:79, 82; 2:188, 190; Delatte and Derchain, Les initiales magiques gréco-égpytiennes, 34, 172-73; P. Berol. 21127, in Brashear, "Vier Berliner Zaubertexte," 25, 27.  
40 PGM IV.850, 853, 3040; Daniel and Maltomini, eds., Supplementum Magicum, 2:62, 64, 208, 212, 216; Delatte and Derchain, Les initiales magiques gréco-égpytiennes, 261-64.  
42 Jarl Fossum and Brian Glazer, "Seth in the Magical Texts," ZPE 100 (1994): 86-92, with a discussion of how one distinguishes between "Seth, the son of Adam" and "the Egyptian god Seth-Typhon."  
44 See, among others, Robert Schlichting, "Offenbarung," in LA 4:557  
45 P. Leiden 383 5/13-15 = PDM xiv.129-31. It is worth noting that the situation described matches Moses 1 in the Pearl of Great Price, but is not found in the Bible.
Abraham' although they have not learned who Abraham is. The same must be said about Isaac, and Jacob and Israel; which names, although confessedly Hebrew, are frequently introduced by those Egyptians who profess to produce some wonderful result by means of their knowledge. Thus ancient Egyptian documents contain the name Abraham, modern scholars who study these documents say that they mention the name Abraham, and other ancient sources say that the Egyptians used the name Abraham. Most people seem to be convinced that there has been sufficient "demonstration that a name exists, and is not unlikely in the given region and period." To my knowledge, the only person who doubts that the name Abraham exists in the papyri is Edward H. Ashment. Ashment, who finds himself outside the mainstream of scholarship on this point, must give some convincing evidence to support this denial.

Despite such clear and overwhelming evidence, Ashment argues that the name is not Abraham, and certainly not the biblical Abraham, because (1) the demotic name identified as Abraham is not spelled the same way in demotic as the name of the construction worker Abram; (2) the demotic name identified as Abraham is spelled similarly to the name Abrasax; Ashment thinks that the two names are etymologically related and that, therefore, the demotic name is not that of the biblical Abraham since he has constructed a different etymology. Unfortunately Ashment's argument from etymology will not bear scrutiny. His test case for etymology is the name Abrasax, which appears three times in the papyrus in question. In P. Lond. demot. 10070 + P.

---

46 Origen, Contra Celsum I, 22.
47 See above, notes 35-37; this does not include Christian amulets and texts that mention Abraham by quoting the first line of the gospel of Matthew, e.g., Gerald M. Browne, "Illinois Coptic Texts, I." for Bulletin for the American Society of Papyrologists 16/1–2 (1979): 33; Ernestus Schaefer, ed., Volumen codicumque fragmenta graeca cum amuleto christiano (Leipzig: Teubner, 1912), 18–32.
48 Dow, Conventions in Editing, 28.
49 The name δρέμ is attested in O. Petrie, line 4, in W. M. Flinders Petrie, Hyksos and Israelite Cities (1906; reprint London: Histories & Mysteries of Man, 1989), pl. XXIV.
50 Ashment appears to be confused by the spelling "Abraxam" in Janet H. Johnson, "The Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden 1 384," Oudheidkundige
Lugd. Bat. J 383 (PDM xiv) at 23/24 (=698) the name appears as 'br-STE-ks' and is glossed in Old Coptic as Abrasax, but at both 13/27 (=392) and ν 12/8 (=1033) the name is spelled 'br's's'ks. This is clearly the same name and has been taken so by all scholars who have edited the papyrus. The switch between an 'ayin (א) and an aleph (א) does not pose a problem in demotic since these two sounds have coalesced. Thus the spelling of a foreign name is not necessarily an indication of the etymology of the name.

Ashment clings to the reading “ABRAHME” based on the transcription 'br-hme despite (1) the Old Coptic gloss abrakhm, (2) the fact that the demotic word transcribed hme becomes the Coptic


The use of the group writing for ste has been commented on in Francis Ll. Griffith and Herbert E. Thompson, The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden, 3 vols. (London: Grevel, 1904), 1:147 n. for I, line 24. The sign is that listed in Georg Moller, Hieratische Paläographie, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1927–36), 2:14; 3:15, #167. The gloss gives a reading for this sign as s that is otherwise unattested.

In Johnson, “PDM xiv.376–94,” “PDM xiv.695–700,” “PDM xiv.1026–45,” in Betz, ed., Greek Magical Papyri, 218, 233, 245, the name is read as “Abrasaks.”

For example, compare the spellings of demotic ‘kr “boat” as s, syy, syy and syy (EDG 1, 12, 73), swy “to be far” as sve, and syy (EDG 2, 57). syy “panther” as ‘b (EDG 3, 59), b.t “altar” as sbw (EDG 3, 58). sbh “to forget” as ‘bb (EDG 4, 59), sbx “raven” as sbx (EDG 4, 59). Examples can be multiplied at will; these are simply those from the first four pages of EDG. In the last century and the early part of the present century, the two letters were often not distinguished in demotic studies. This is also indicated in the same papyrus by the demotic spelling ’t-n-y for Hebrew Adonai with the gloss Atone in the papyrus in question; see Griffith and Thompson, Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden, 2:X, line 4. See also Donald B. Redford, Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 258 n. 2; James E. Hoch, Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 386, 412–13, 431, 435.
word "craftsmen,"54 (3) the acknowledgment of the translation he was using that "the spelling of the magical names given here [Ashment's source] is based on the Demotic spelling supplemented by the Old Coptic spelling,"55 even though "many Demotic words are still spelled historically, with no evidence of the actual pronunciation,"56 and (4) the fact that "the alphabetic signs were added to the Demotic spellings for the same reason that they were used in the magical names—to indicate correct pronunciation."57 Therefore an (epenthetic) e added to the end of the word that is not reflected in the gloss should not be seen as taking precedence over the gloss in determining the pronunciation of the word.58 Normalization into English Abraham is perfectly acceptable.59 His etymology also suffers from the drawback that, in Egyptian words formed with hme-ham-, that element comes first in the word.60 Ashment also fails to give a meaning for either Abraham or Abrasax; it seems strange to make an argument based on etymology and then never give an etymology. I suppose that because the argument Ashment con-

54 EDG, 303; Crum, Coptic Dictionary, 673b–674a.
57 Ibid., 125.
58 The issue is discussed in ibid., 125–27, note especially the opening remarks; see also Wilhelm Spiegelberg, Demotische Grammatik (Heidelberg: Winters, 1925), 4–5. The historical spelling of demotic hme derives from the Middle Egyptian antecedents hmw "to be skilled" and hmw mw "craftsman" (EDG 303; Wb 3:82–84; CDME 170), whose final ws have long since dropped from pronunciation.
59 Ashment's complaint about the use of the standard English spelling of "Zoar" instead of the standard Greek spelling of Segor in an English translation (p. 17) falls under the same heading. The object of a translation into English is to make the text comprehensible to the reader of English. Those who can read Greek presumably do not need a translation. Ashment is simply grasping at straws, looking for things to criticize; using common English forms of names is a standard and accepted practice in the field; see, for example, Alan K. Bowman, Egypt after the Pharaohs, 332 B.C. – A.D. 642 from Alexander to the Arab Conquest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 8.
structs leaves him with a meaningless word, that he is compelled to declare that the name Abraham is simple magical mumbo-jumbo. It seems as though Ashment is grasping at straws here. More importantly, variations in the demotic spelling of the name hardly amount to the refutation of the existence of the name.

Thus there can be no question that the name Abraham appears in the papyri and that the name refers to the biblical Abraham. Significantly, even the Tanners did not follow Ashment in this mistake! The implications of this evidence now will be explored.

The Background of the Papyri

The mere appearance of the name Abraham in any random papyrus provides only limited information. The background of the papyri that contain these references plays a significant role in understanding their implications. Ashment and, more particularly, the Tanners seem to realize this and make some attempt to address this issue. Unfortunately, their discussions betray a misunderstanding of this background. A proper understanding of these issues will prevent many of the misconceptions that regrettably plague most of the discussions of these documents—including the majority of the treatments by scholars. The position I take on this issue is currently a minority position—the documents are Egyptian religious texts not Greek magical texts—but it is the position taken by most Demoticists who work with the documents, and it is a position that is gaining a wider acceptance among those of a classical background who work in this field.

Our story begins with Giovanni d’Anastasi, collector of Egyptian antiquities extraordinaires. A successful merchant who saw the advantage of cashing in on Europe’s taste in Egyptian antiquities,61 Anastasi employed several agents to gather antiquities for him, including one Piccinini who was working in Girga (Thinis) in 1828.62 Anastasi’s full collections cut across boundaries of genre

---

and time, but they were an amalgamation of smaller collections. He dispersed his massive collections in four installments: One of these was in 1826, the second in 1828 (bought by the Leiden museum), the third in 1839, and the last in 1857, shortly after Anastasi’s death. The final auction contained 1,129 lots and took five days to complete. The fifty-eight papyri and twenty-one ostraca were some of the most coveted items in the collection, and museums from all over Europe bought them up. The order in which the documents were sold tells us nothing about the discovery date of the papyrus since, for example, different parts of the same papyrus were sold in 1828 and 1857. The third-century A.D. papyri—like papyri of all periods from the Anastasi collection—were then published individually in scattered publications that left no clue that they were originally together. Several scholars who worked with the documents individually suspected that the third-century papyri were all part of a single collection, but only

---

63 As is amply demonstrated by the catalogue of his work in the auction of 1857: François Lenormant, Catalogue d’une collection d’antiquités égyptiennes (Paris; Maulde et Renou, 1857).

64 Apparently, Anastasi had been contemplating this as early as 1826; see the letter of J. Rifaud to M. Drovetti, 18 May 1826, in Bernardino Drovetti, Epistolario, ed. Silvio Curto (Milano: Cisalpino, 1985), 476–77.

65 This collection includes BM 10247 (P. Anastasi I); see Alan H. Gardiner, Egyptian Hieratic Texts, Transcribed, Translated and Annotated. (EHT) Series I: Literary Texts of the New Kingdom, part 1: The Papyrus Anastasi I and the Papyrus Koller, Together with the Parallel Texts (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), 1; BM 10243 (P. Anastasi II), BM 10246 (P. Anastasi III), BM 10249 (P. Anastasi IV), BM 10244 (P. Anastasi V), BM 10245 (P. Anastasi VI); see Alan H. Gardiner, Late-Egyptian Miscellanies (Bruxelles: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1937), xiii–xvii.


67 Of these 1129, 1115 were Egyptian. Lenormant, Catalogue d’une collection d’antiquités égyptiennes, 90; see also Dawson, “Anastasi, Sallier, and Harris and Their Papyri,” 160.


69 Griffith and Thompson, Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden, 1:1.

70 Francis Li. Griffith, “The Old Coptic Horoscope of the Stobart Collection,” ZAS 38 (1900): 72; Otto Lagercrantz, Papyrus Graecus Holmiensis (p. Holm.): Recepte für Silber Steine und Pulpur (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1913), 54; Theodor Hopfner, Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1974), iv (this work was originally published in 1921):
recently has any effort been made to assemble a list of the contents of this archive, which has somewhat inappropriately been called the "Thebes cache."\textsuperscript{71} Similar archives have been assembled from Anastasi's collections, forming the Memphis "Undertakers' Archive" (203–65 B.C.),\textsuperscript{72} the Theban archive of Timounis, daughter of Thabis (270–175 B.C.),\textsuperscript{73} the Theban archive of Amenothes, son of Harsiesis (216–170 B.C.),\textsuperscript{74} and the Middle Kingdom stelae from the terrace of the Great God of Abydos.\textsuperscript{75} Other archives of similar material are also known.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{71} Garth Fowden, \textit{The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 168–72. I have added to Fowden's list several papyri that he missed. A complete list of the papyri in the Thebes cache will appear in Robert Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context," in \textit{Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt}, part II, vol. 18.5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, in press) and the companion article by William Brashear, "Die Zauberpapyri aus Ägypten," in ibid. My list was done independently of the lists in these articles. The name "Thebes cache" is not appropriate here since there are many caches of documents from Thebes.


\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 37–47.


\textsuperscript{76} For example, \textit{P. Osl. I}, 1 (=\textit{PGM} XXXVI), \textit{P. Osl. I}, 2 (=\textit{PGM} XXXVII), \textit{P. Osl. I}, 3 (=\textit{PGM} XXXVIII), \textit{P. Osl. I}, 4 (=\textit{PGM} XXXIX), all acquired by Samson Eitrem from the Fayyum in 1920 (except the last, which was acquired in 1923)
In 1893 similarity of content caused Albrecht Dietrich and his students to desire to publish all papyri of this sort together in one corpus.\textsuperscript{77} Karl Preisendanz finally accomplished this feat in two volumes published in 1928 and 1931; a third volume of indices and additions was printed but destroyed on 4 December 1941 when the press was bombed in World War II.\textsuperscript{78} This work, entitled \textit{Papyri Graecae Magicae} ("Greek Magical Papyri," abbreviated as \textit{PGM}), reflected the editor’s idea—and the general scholarly consensus—of what these documents were. A second edition appeared in 1973 and 1974 (again without indices).\textsuperscript{79} Preisendanz and those who have supplemented him also included ostraca, \textit{lamellae},\textsuperscript{80} \textit{defixiones},\textsuperscript{81} and gems (which are, strictly speaking, not papyri, though this is a minor quibble). Fortunately, Preisendanz managed to assemble much of the Roman period Anastasi ritual archive in one place, though this was unintentional. The papyri from this archive are as follows:

(1) \textit{P. Berol. inv. 5025}, also known as \textit{PGM I}, was acquired by the Berlin Museum in the 1857 auction, where it was lot number 1074.\textsuperscript{82} This manuscript contains 347 lines and 7 texts, mostly in Greek with some Old Coptic. It is paleographically dated to the fourth or fifth century A.D.\textsuperscript{83}

(2) \textit{P. Berol. inv. 5026}, also known as \textit{PGM II}, was acquired by the Berlin Museum in the 1857 auction, where it was lot number 1075.\textsuperscript{84} This manuscript contains 183 lines and 2 texts,

\footnotesize

and all from the fourth century; see Eitrem, \textit{Papyri Osloenses}, vol. 1; Preisendanz, \textit{Papyri Graecae Magicae}, 2:162, 175–77.
\textsuperscript{77} Preisendanz, \textit{Papyri Graecae Magicae}, 1:viii.
\textsuperscript{78} The third volume circulates only in \textit{samizdat} form from photocopies of the galley proofs; see Betz, "Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri," xlv.
\textsuperscript{79} Karl Preisendanz, \textit{Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri}, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973–74). The two editions are essentially the same.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{A lamella} is a thin plate, generally of silver, bronze, copper, or gold, with an inscription—generally of a specific type—engraven into it.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{A defixio} is a lead \textit{lamella} generally containing an imprecation.
\textsuperscript{82} Lenormant, \textit{Catalogue d’une collection d’antiquités égyptiennes}, 87; Preisendanz, \textit{Papyri Graecae Magicae}, 1:1 and n. 1.
\textsuperscript{83} Betz, \textit{Greek Magical Papyri}, xxiii.
mostly in Greek. It is paleographically dated to the fourth century A.D.85

(3) *P. Bibl. Nat. Suppl.* gr. no. 574, also known as *PGM IV*, was acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in the 1857 auction, where it was lot number 1073.86 This codex contains 3274 lines and 53 texts, mostly in Greek with some Old Coptic. It is paleographically dated to the fourth century A.D.87

(4) *P. Holm.*, also known as the Stockholm alchemical papyrus. This manuscript contains 28 columns, 1125 lines, and 152 texts in Greek.88 It is paleographically dated to the third or the fourth century.89

(5) *PGM Va*, a loose sheet of papyrus found with *P. Holm.* and sometimes counted as part of that manuscript. It contains three lines of text.90 It is not dated paleographically.91

(6) *P. Lond. 46*, also known as *PGM V*, was acquired by the British Museum in 1839.92 This manuscript contains 489 lines and 10 texts, mostly in Greek. It is paleographically dated to the fourth century, though there is some question.93

(7) *P. Lugd. Bat. J 384*, also known as *P. Leiden I 384*, Leiden V, Anastasi 75, or *PGM XII*, was acquired by the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden in 1828.94 The verso of this manuscript contains 13 columns, 656 lines, and 29 texts, mainly in Greek with significant portions in demotic and Old Coptic; hieratic also appears. The verso is paleographically dated to the fourth century.95 The recto contains 22 columns of demotic stories woven into a cycle whose frame story is known as the Myth of the Sun's
40 REVIEW OF BOOKS ON THE BOOK OF MORMON 7/1 (1995)

Eye.96 Some of the stories within this text were adapted into Aesop’s Fables.97 The text on the recto dates to the second century paleographically. The verso of this manuscript has never been properly published.98

(8) P. Lugd. Bat. J 395, also known as P. Leiden I 395, Leiden W, or PGM XIII, was acquired by the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden in 1828.99 This manuscript contains 1077 lines and 6 texts, mainly in Greek with some Old Coptic. It is paleographically dated to the fourth century.100

(9) P. Lond. demot. 10070 + P. Lugd. Bat. J 383, also known as PDM xiv, was acquired half by the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden in 1828 and half by the British Museum from the auction in 1857, where it was lot number 1072.101 This manuscript contains 62 columns, 1227 lines and 98 texts, mainly in demotic with Old Coptic glosses and some passages in Greek. It is paleographically dated to the third century A.D.102

(10) P. Brit. Mus. inv. 10588, also known as BM 10588 and PDM lxii, was acquired by the British Museum probably in 1839. The manuscript contains 216 lines and 16 texts, mainly in demotic

---


98 This includes the recent publication of Daniel, ed., Two Greek Magical Papyri, 2–29, which completely omits the demotic columns; these must be supplied by Johnson, “Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384,” 29–64, pl. VIII–XIII. The pattern was established by Leemans, Papyri Graeci Musei Antiquarii Publici Lugduni Batavi, 2:1–76.


100 Betz, Greek Magical Papyri, xxiii.

101 Lenormant, Catalogue d’une collection d’antiquités égyptiennes, 87.

102 Preisendanz, Papyri Graecae Magicae, 2:131; Betz, Greek Magical Papyri, xxiii.
with some passages in Greek. It is paleographically dated to the second or third century A.D. 103

(11) Louvre E 3229, also known as PDM Supplement, was acquired by the Louvre from the auction in 1857, where it was lot number 1061. 104 This manuscript contains 208 lines and 14 texts, mainly in demotic and hieratic with some Old Coptic glosses. It is paleographically dated to the third century. 105

(12) P. Leiden I 397, also known as Leiden X, was acquired by the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden in 1828. This manuscript contains 16 columns and 679 lines and 105 texts, listing the properties of various chemical substances in Greek. 106 It is considered "a twin" of the Stockholm Alchemical Papyrus. 107 It is paleographically dated to the third or fourth century A.D. 108

(13) P. Leiden I 398, also known as Leiden Y, was acquired by the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden in 1828. This manuscript contains a text in demotic followed by a list of letter combinations in Greek. It has not been dated paleographically. 109

Together, ten of these thirteen manuscripts account for a significant portion of the PGM (comprising most of the ritual manuals for that corpus) and the two earliest chemical texts in Greek. They derive most probably from a single archive found in Thebes, perhaps from the fourth century A.D.—though, like most Egyptian archives, 110 this one seems to have been formed over time.

---

103 Bell, Nock, and Thompson, Magical Texts from a Bilingual Papyrus, 5; Betz, Greek Magical Papyri, xxv.
104 Lenormant, Catalogue d'une collection d'antiquités égyptiennes, 86.
105 Johnson, "Louvre E3229," 56–58; Betz, ed., Greek Magical Papyri, xxviii.
107 Lagercrantz, Papyrus Graecus Holmiensis, 50
110 The classic reassembled archive is the "Naunakhte" archive, which passed along family lines from Qn·hr·hpš=f (who lived during the reign of Ramses II) through at least Mw·nḥtw=f a century later (the reign of Ramses IX). The archive consisted of letters, memoranda, legal texts, documents relating to the private affairs of the Hnsfw family, exercises, practical handbooks (of so-called "magical" texts), and literary texts. For a discussion, see P. W. Pestman, "Who Were the Owners, in the 'Community of Workmen,' of the Chester Beatty
The paleographic dates are problematic and questionable. Thus far the name of the owner or owners of this archive has not been discovered.

The Anastasi archive provides the best evidence for the nature of the papyri in the *PGM. P. Leiden I 384* is written by the same scribe as *P. Leiden I 383*, and this scribe uses Greek, Old Coptic, demotic, and hieratic within these two papyri. Whatever one may think of the idea that Greeks in Egypt learned demotic, in the Roman period hieratic—as the name meaning “priestly” implies—was used only by Egyptian priests. This identifies both the scribe who wrote these papyri and the user of the papyri.
Thus it is not surprising that "the contents and the methodology [of the papyri] are overwhelmingly Egyptian. Most of the material is completely Egyptian and its origins are easily traceable in earlier Egyptian religious and magical literature. The methods used are likewise standard Egyptian practices." The various lists of rituals contained in the papyri match the list given by Porphyry of things the Egyptian priest Chaeremon said were "common talk among the Egyptians." That the same scribe who wrote the Greek also wrote the demotic passages is demonstrated, not only by the intercalation of Greek passages and demotic passages, but by the fact that this occurs within the same ritual. The passage that originally provoked this quibble (P. Leiden I 384 1(12)/1–11 = PGM XII.474–79 + PDM xii.135–46) is one of these, although the mixture of demotic and Greek has prevented it from ever being published properly within the last century. The structure of this ritual follows a pattern found in the Book of the Dead: (1) title and initial instructions, (2) vignette, (3) recitation, (4) instructions for use. The recited portion of the ritual is written in

---

115 Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire." Patai's assertion, in The Jewish Alchemists, 56–57, that Leiden Papyrus W was written by a Jew ignores the general context of the papyri.


119 The latest publication, Daniel, ed., Two Greek Magical Papyri, is a beautiful edition, but the photographs omit all the demotic, including those portions where the text is interwoven with the Greek; the text is, therefore, left completely unintelligible. The photographs in Johnson, "Demotic Magical Spells of Leiden I 384," pl. VIII–XIII, are difficult if not impossible to read. Much of this is due to the deterioration of the papyrus itself; ibid., 30–31. Preisendanz, Papyri Graecae Magicae, 2:86, only transcribed the Greek portions.

120 This pattern may be observed in Book of the Dead 1, 1B, 13, 15B2, 18–20, 30–32, 45, 58, 64, 72, 84, 86, 89, 91–92, 99–101, 104, 116, 119, 128, 130, 133–36, 136B, 137A, 140, 142, 144, 146–48, 151, 153, 155–65.
Greek script, while the instructions are written in demotic. (In this particular ritual, a love spell with the threat of incineration, the vignette is an integral part of the text since the closing instructions in demotic are to "[Write these words with this picture upon a new papyrus."] Other rituals on this papyrus follow similar lines. Such a mixture of languages and scripts could only have been used by a bilingual scribe, but it follows a pattern of switching language that dates back at least to the Eighteenth Dynasty, if not to the Old Kingdom.

The use of Judeo-Christian material by pagan Egyptians can be documented in two other instances which shed light on the processes by which it was incorporated. (1) The Egyptian pagan


121 The term in *PGM* XII.479 is ἐκπυρῶσαι; "incinerate" occurs here in this corpus. Though there are occasional references to "burning" in the sense of lust (*PGM* LXI.23; XXXIIa.3–8; LXVIII.1–20; and ambiguously *PGM* VII.473, 990; XVI.4–5) it is also commonly used in the *PGM*, even in love charms, as a punishment (*PGM* IV.2488; XII.490; XIXa.50; XXXVI.181, 110–11, 340–46, 355–57), or used of lamps (*PGM* I.340; IV.1732, 2372) or other flammable material (*PGM* IV.155, 2143; V.71; LVIII). Compare also the "flaming mouth" in *PGM* V.154; VII.245 with the similar reference in the negative confession of Book of the Dead 125. Rittner, Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, 112–19, 136–42, 157–59, 162–72, shows how these late period love charms are connected with ritual complexes that include human sacrifice. The connection with the book of Abraham in Gee, "Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts," 61, is, of course, speculation.

122 *PDM* xii.146.


Zosimus of Panopolis (who is roughly contemporary with the Anastasi priestly archive) is familiar with both the Egyptian Amduat and Jewish sources, and refers to either Genesis, Jubilees, or the book of Enoch as “our book.” (2) Two papyri whose provenance is unknown nevertheless seem to come from the same archive. The first, P. Lond. I 125, was acquired by the British Museum in 1888. The recto, dating to July 336, is an account text detailing the land holdings of an estate centered in Hermonthis, the verso (paleographically dated to the fifth century) is known as PGM IXa and contains an invocation to Nephthys. The companion text, P. Lips., has an account text from A.D. 338 on the recto covering the same accounts as P. Lond. I 125, but the verso contains Psalms 30:5–55:14. Presumably, the owner of the archive read both texts.

The Anastasi archive is clearly Egyptian. Yet of the other material in the PGM, most was also found in Egypt, and the rest was chiefly found in the general area of temples of the Isis cult—

---

125 There is no reason to assume along with Patai, The Jewish Alchemists, 56, that Zosimus was a Jew.
128 Patai, The Jewish Alchemists, 56, citing Zosimus, whose allusion is either to Genesis 6:1–5; Jubilees 5:1–2; or 1 Enoch 6–7.
129 Roger S. Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 126 and n. 79.
130 Preisendanz, Papyri Graecae Magicae, 2:54–55
132 Kenyon, Greek Papyri in the British Museum, 1:123–25; Preisendanz, Papyri Graecae Magicae, 2: 54–55; note esp. the comments of Jan Bergman and Robert K. Ritner in Betz, ed., Greek Magical Papyri, 150 n. 3.
134 Carl F. G. Heinrici, Der Leipziger Papyrussammler, 150 n. 3.
135 See the comments of Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity, 126 n. 79. Bagnall’s statement that the owner was Christian is an assumption that seems to me dubious.
the form of the ancient Egyptian religion that spread abroad throughout the Mediterranean and Roman world. Even the earliest *defixiones* in Attica\(^{136}\) can be linked with the temple of Isis established in the fourth century B.C. at Pirrhæus, the port of Athens.\(^{137}\) These types of rituals always seemed repugnant to classicists and are thought to have been introduced by foreigners.\(^{138}\) Even so, most of the scholars who have worked with this material have approached it from the assumption that it is Greek in origin rather than Egyptian, and have erred egregiously, though unwittingly, in so doing. This has serious consequences for the scholarship that is based on this evidence and these assumptions, some of which we will indicate later. For example, together the *PGM* and the *defixiones* provide direct refutation of Roger Bagnall’s assertion that “it is hard to find much evidence of its [the native Egyptian religion’s] activity or prosperity.”\(^{139}\) He nullifies their weight as evidence by classifying them not as documents pertaining to the Egyptian religion, but as documents pertaining to magic.\(^{140}\)

**What Is “Magic”?**

If the so-called Greek Magical Papyri are not “Greek,” nor necessarily papyri, are they “magical”? That depends on what one defines as “magic.” In dealing with this issue Ashment commits the fallacy of equivocation. “The fallacy of equivocation occurs whenever a term is used in two or more senses within a single argument, so that a conclusion appears to follow when in fact


\(^{137}\) On that temple, see Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 174.


\(^{139}\) Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 267, cf. 261–68.

\(^{140}\) Ibid., 273–75.
it does not.”¹⁴¹ Thus, for instance, Ashment uses Robert Ritner’s statement that “magic” was found all over Egypt and interprets it according to Bruce R. McConkie’s remarks about “magic” (pp. 20–21). But were McConkie and Ritner talking about the same thing?

Ritner adopted a “working definition” wherein “any activity which seeks to obtain its goals by methods outside the simple laws of cause and effect will be considered ‘magical’ in the Western sense.”¹⁴² By Ritner’s definition, Joseph Smith’s use of the Urim and Thummim to translate the Book of Mormon, Jesus’ miracles, and even the Atonement of Christ are considered “magical.” McConkie, however, would not consider any of these examples to be “magic,” and most believing “born-again” Christians would be hesitant about applying this definition universally. For Ritner himself, “‘magic’ is not seen as a universal category of equal applicability across time and space (contra all early anthropology, certain modern theorists of comparative religion, and most Egyptological treatments). Inherent in the term is the subjectivity of cultural bias, and this ‘magic’ must be understood with reference to a specific cultural context. This working definition openly recognizes and incorporates the Western bias of the present scholarly category.”¹⁴³ “This definition of ‘magic’ is serviceable for analysing elements of our own and other cultures from our cultural perspective; it does not, however, make any pretense of being universally valid from the perspective of those other cultures.”¹⁴⁴ The cultural context is significant since, to the Egyptians, “the force of ḫꜣꜣ [the Egyptian word conventionally translated ‘magic’] is to be understood primarily as the power of effective duplication or ‘empowered images,’ . . . [thus] the use of ḫꜣꜣ

¹⁴¹ Fischer, Historians’ Fallacies, 274. The fallacy of equivocation is a favorite tactic of anti-Mormons; see Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Aspen, 1992), 55–62.


¹⁴³ Ibid., 237. Compare the remarks of Koch, Geschichte der ägyptischen Religion, 17.

could hardly be construed in Egyptian terms as ‘activity outside the law of natural causality’ since *hk3* is itself the ultimate source of causality, the generative force of nature."\(^{145}\)

For McConkie, on the other hand, “magic is the art which produces effects by the assistance of supernatural beings or by a mastery of secret forces in nature” when such is “in imitation of true religion . . . by unauthorized . . . ministers.”\(^{146}\) One who “practices the black art of magic” or witchcraft is, according to McConkie, a witch.\(^{147}\) The key to what constitutes witchcraft is that it involves “actual intercourse with evil spirits” or for someone to have “entered into a compact with Satan.”\(^{148}\) McConkie goes on to state that “there are not witches, of course, in the sense of old hags flying on broomsticks through October skies; such mythology is a modernistic spoofing of a little understood practice.”\(^{149}\) Furthermore, “it is probable that none, or almost none, of those unhappily dealt with as supposed witches were persons in actual communion with evil spirits. Their deaths illustrate the deadly extremes to which the principles of true religion can be put when administered by uninspired persons.”\(^{150}\) The key for McConkie’s understanding of the term *magic* is inspiration: Without inspiration it is impossible to tell miracle from magic, the work of God from the work of an evil spirit.\(^{151}\)

As is common in most of his work, McConkie based his definition on scriptural passages. In the Bible, the term *magic* is not defined but is generally used of outsiders.\(^{152}\) It does not appear in the Doctrine and Covenants, but in the Book of Mormon it appears at the end of Nephite civilization: When “these Gadianton robbers, who were among the Lamanites, did infest the land, . . . it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics,


\(^{147}\) Ibid., 840.

\(^{148}\) Ibid.

\(^{149}\) Ibid.

\(^{150}\) Ibid.

\(^{151}\) Ibid., 197, 270–73.

and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land” (Mormon 1:18–19, punctuation altered; cf. 2:10). Though the scriptures do not explicitly define “magic” they do associate it directly with “the power of the evil one,” and the impression left upon those who read the scriptures in English is that it involves the manipulation of evil spirits (either in the sense of “manipulating evil spirits” or “being manipulated by evil spirits”).153 On these matters, Latter-day Saints have specific scriptural counsel (notably D&C 46; 50; 129). First, it is the “Spirit of truth” that detects “spirits which ye could not understand” (D&C 50:13–23). Second, “that which doth not edify is not of God” (D&C 50:23). Third, “if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done... If you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand, and you receive not that spirit, ye shall ask of the Father in the name of Jesus; and if he give not unto you that spirit, then you may know that it is not of God. And it shall be given unto you power over that spirit; and you shall proclaim against that spirit with a loud voice that it is not of God—Not with a railing accusation that ye be not overcome, neither with boasting nor rejoicing, lest you be seized therewith” (D&C 50:29–33). The presiding authority, if he is in tune with the Holy Spirit, has the gift to discern the source of spiritual manifestations (D&C 46:27–29). Evil spirits are to be dispelled through the power of God (Jude 1:9; Moses 1:12–23; Joseph Smith–History 1:15–17). Thus for Latter-day Saints, the detection and overcoming of evil spirits and magic are not generally empirical.154 Only one empirical test


154 Note particularly the case of casting the devil out of Newel Knight, detailed in *HC* 1:82–84 and recapitulated in 1:92–93. Newel Knight’s testimony was that the devil was cast out “by the power of God, and Joseph Smith was the instrument in the hands of God on the occasion.” Furthermore, when Knight was asked if he saw the devil and if so what he looked like, Knight replied that he had seen the devil but had to ask the lawyer, “Do you, Mr. Seymour, understand the things of the spirit?” After a negative reply, Knight told the lawyer, “It would be of no use to tell you what the devil looked like, for it was a spiritual sight, and spiritually discerned; and of course you would not understand it were I to tell you of it.”
is given for the detection of whether an angelic "administration is from God"—and there the evil spirits are the ones who fail to be empirical (D&C 129:1–9).

Thus McConkie's definition of magic is nonempirical and nonobjective (in the common scholarly use of that term), while Ritner strove "to formulate an objective criterion for judging the 'magical' nature of any given act."155 Ashment's use of the fallacy of equivocation is therefore particularly egregious. Whether a practice qualifies as "magic" depends on the definition adopted. "At the outset, a definition of 'magic' is critical for any discussion of the problem since we find that there is no consensus on the meaning of the term in English, leaving aside the wider problem of concepts equated with 'magic' in other cultures. Most often, the English term is bandied about as if an implicit consensus existed, yet this can easily be proved to be false, not only by widespread contemporary scholarly disagreement on the topic but by the unstandardized ways in which the term has been used historically."156 "In any discussion of magical spells and techniques, one is at once confronted by the complete absence of any shared criteria for exactly what constitutes 'magic.' All too often, the religious and medical practices of one culture or era become 'magic' when viewed from the perspective of another."157

Definitions of magic tend to distinguish it from religion by one or more of the following methods:

**Goal-oriented definitions** (associated most closely with the work of Bronislaw Malinowski) focus on the goals of the activity: Activities with specific goals are seen as magical while those without specific goals are seen as religious.158 Malinowski's critics,
however, have noted that “Malinowski’s contrast between the practical goals of magical ritual and the broad social values fostered by religious ritual seems to hinge more on terminology than on substance. The difference seems to be a stylistic choice of concrete or abstract phrasing.”

159 To give a concrete example, the prayer through which a born-again Christian becomes born-again has a specific goal—becoming a saved Christian—and therefore it is “magic” under this definition, as is the recitation of the shahada by which a Muslim becomes a Muslim.

**Group-oriented definitions** focus on whether the activity is done by or for individuals or by large groups in concert: Religion is seen as centering around a Church, whereas magic centers solely on the individual. 160 One of the problems with this definition comes when it is applied to the Egyptian evidence, since it has been argued that the magicians in Egypt were lone private indi-

---


160 “The really religious beliefs are always common to the determined group, and they make its unity”; Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph W. Swain (New York: Free Press, 1915). 59. On the other hand, “there is no Church of magic. Between the magician and the individuals who consult him, as between these individuals themselves, there are no lasting bonds which make them members of the same moral community. . . . The magician has a clientele and not a Church” (ibid., 60). “The professional-client relationship is ideally-theoretically to be found in the magical complex. . . . Individual ends are more frequently to be found toward the magical end of this continuum, as against groupal ends toward the other. . . . The magical practitioner or his ‘customer’ goes through his activities as a private individual, or individuals, functioning much less as groups. . . . The practitioner decides whether the process is to start at all, toward the magical pole. . . . Similarly, the practitioner decides when the process is to start, in the case of magic.” Goode, “Magic and Religion,” 177–78; see also R. Campbell Thompson, *Semitic Magic: Its Origins and Development* (reprint New York: Ktav, 1971), xvii.
individuals, but these "magicians" turn out to be Egyptian priests\textsuperscript{161} who were organized into phyles and associations.\textsuperscript{162} Under this definition, where should one classify the Mormon rite of baptism, which is for the salvation of the individual, but also is the rite whereby the individual becomes a member of the Church? Christians who feel that salvation comes independent of a Church should be aware that under this definition, they are guilty of "magic."\textsuperscript{163}

Social deviance definitions focus on how society perceives the individual engaged in an activity: Religious activities which conform to social norms are seen as religious, while those that deviate from social norms are seen as magical.\textsuperscript{164} This definition would mean that whether Mormonism (or any other religion for that matter) was "magic" or not would depend on one's geographical or chronological position rather than one's theological or doctrinal position. Born-again Christians who accuse Mormons of practicing "magic" in the Bible-belt would themselves be guilty of practicing "magic" in Utah. The ancient Egyptians could not be guilty of practicing "magic" because their practices were not deviant but the norm for Egyptian religion.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{161}Ritner, Mechanisms of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, 192-233; Ritner, "Egyptian Magic," 194. It should also be noted that one of the words for "magician" in Hebrew (\textit{lartumim}) is simply borrowed from the title of an Egyptian priest (\textit{kry-tp}); Ritner, Mechanisms of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, 220-21; cf. Wb 3:395; The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 24 vols. (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956-), 6:116.


\textsuperscript{163}For a discussion with references, see Peterson and Ricks, Offenders for a Word, 101-7.

\textsuperscript{164}"Magic is thought of as at least potentially directed against the society, or a major accepted group within it, or a respected individual in good repute with the gods." Goode, "Magic and Religion," 178. "The charge of magic is likely to be made by legitimate religious leaders against people who are viewed as threatening the social order but who have as yet done no other persecutable criminal offense." Alan F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions for G. Quispel, ed. R. van den Broeck and M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 370.

\textsuperscript{165}Ritner, "Egyptian Magic," 194-97; Ritner, Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, 12-13.
defined as that form of religious deviance whereby individual or social goals are sought by means alternate to those normally sanctioned by the dominant religious institution,"¹⁶⁶ then dissidents, dissenters, and former Mormons who protest Church policy by staging candlelight vigils, taking out advertisements in newspapers, or turning to the media to promote their causes are involved in magic instead of the expression of any sort of religious sentiment.

**Attitudinal definitions** of magic focus on the attitude of the individual engaged in a particular activity: Propitiation is religious, while threats are magical.¹⁶⁷ Some definitions hold that magic is primarily defensive in nature,¹⁶⁸ while others reverse this position and state that magic is primarily hostile in nature.¹⁶⁹ "Problems with this definition are legion, not least because it requires the investigator to intuit subjectively the attitude of the ancient practitioner. This is not often easy or even possible."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ "By religion, then, I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life. In this sense it will readily be perceived that religion is opposed in principle both to magic and to science. . . . Magic as well as . . . science . . . take for granted that the course of nature is determined, not by the passions or caprice of personal beings, but by the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically." James Frazer, The Golden Bough, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan, 1900), 1:63. "The manipulative attitude is to be found most strongly at the magical pole, as against the supplicatory, propitiatory, or cajoling, at the religious pole." Goode, "Magic and Religion," 177; similarly, "although the practitioner may feel cautious in handling such powerful forces, a lesser degree of emotion is expected at the magical end of this continuum" (ibid., 178). Cf. Aune, "Magic and Early Christianity," 1512. T. Witton Davies, Magic, Divination and Demonology among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors (reprint New York: Ktav, 1969), 1-2, takes an even more strident position: "Magic may be briefly defined as the attempt on man's part to have intercourse with spiritual and supernatural beings, and to influence them for his benefit." Thus all prayer would fall under his category of "magic."

¹⁶⁸ For Evans-Pritchard, magic "is primarily not so much a means of controlling nature as of preventing witchcraft and other mystical forces operating against human endeavor by interfering with the empirical measures taken to attain an end." E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Theories of Primitive Religion (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 111.
intention is spelled out by the subject (and it usually is not), the scholar is required to practice mind-reading, something most are not very adept at. "This approach is also of limited scholarly value as a descriptive tool, since it usually merely demonstrates that non-Judeo-Christian societies function in ways non-Judeo-Christian." Even in Judeo-Christian societies the approach is of limited value; for example, "this way of distinguishing magic from religion is unhelpful in dealing with the medieval material." Furthermore, a "basic fallacy in absolutizing this attitudinal distinction between magic and religion is the fact that it is demonstrably false: magic not infrequently supplants while religion not infrequently manipulates supernatural powers." 

Deity-oriented definitions center on the deity or deities invoked in an activity: Those activities which invoke the proper deities are seen to be religious, while those which do not are magic. But this distinction often reduces to a mere statement that the "magician" has a different religion than the one making the definition. Closely related are definitions which concentrate on the source of the power by which the individual is said to perform the activity: "Religion becomes magic when the power by which things operate is transferred from God to the things themselves."

Results-oriented definitions focus on whether an activity produces the results it is supposed to: If it does, it is seen as religious or scientific; if it does not, it is magical. Or alternatively, if it

---

171 Some exceptions may be found in 1 Nephi 6:4; 2 Nephi 2:30.
176 "Up through the twelfth century, if you asked a theologian what magic was you were likely to hear that demons began it and were always involved in it," Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 10.
works, it is magic; if it does not, it is religion.\textsuperscript{179} Part of Frazer’s theories on magic, this notion “fails to account for the remarkable persistence of the ‘pathetic or ludicrous’ activities which he finds so devoid of truth or value.”\textsuperscript{180}

**Combination definitions** seek to use a combination of definitions to determine magic. Thus Aune combines a social-deviance definition with a results-oriented definition.\textsuperscript{181} Goode set up a series of conflicting factors that he saw as magical and envisioned a continuum that this would produce even though the results were sometimes contradictory. However, since Goode provided no way to implement his definition it has not been seriously used. Better in this regard is Stanley Tambiah, who sees a dual criterion for which both elements must be met: “On the one hand, [magic] seems to imitate the logic of technical/technological action that seeks to transform nature or the world of natural things and manifestations. On the other hand, its structure is also transparently rhetorical and performative (in that it consists of acts to create effects on human actors according to accepted social conventions).”\textsuperscript{182} Tambiah’s definition does not deal with religion per se, and thus psychiatry, psychology, politics, and advertising could all fit Tambiah’s definition.

**Open definitions** are those that refuse to define the object of study. Recently, H. S. Versnel has tried to sidestep the issue of problematic definitions of magic, arguing that “the definition should remain open,”\textsuperscript{183} because he wants to continue to use the term without bothering to define it. For him, it is, “besides being a matter of personal viewpoint and, indeed, of belief, of minor importance.”\textsuperscript{184} While I agree with Versnel that it is a matter of the scholar’s viewpoint and belief, I do not see it as being “of minor importance” because it is not personal. The use of open

\textsuperscript{179} Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 1515: “Goals sought within the context of religious deviance are magical when attained through the management of supernatural powers in such a way that results are virtually guaranteed.”

\textsuperscript{180} Ritner, *Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 10.

\textsuperscript{181} Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 1515-16.


\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
definitions in a matter so potentially volatile and derogatory leads to the most common, and most dangerous, definition of magic, the definition by accusation, which we will discuss below. Christopher A. Faraone has challenged the grounds of Versnel’s proposed definitions in the specific case (defixiones) in which Versnel would like to apply it, noting that it “seems inevitably (and unfortunately) to rest on our subjective appraisal of the attitude of the persons performing the acts.” 185

Even if a scholar carefully defines his terms, the definitions are sometimes not followed in the discussion of the material. Even someone as well versed in the theoretical literature of magic as Peter Schäfer can slip into a functional definition of magic that is different from his theoretical one. For example, for Schäfer, what identifies magical elements in the Hekhalot literature is the use of a seal, a crown, or adjurations of the name of God. 186

Two other aspects to the discussion of magic as pertains to ancient Egypt should be considered. The first is that Frazer, in formulating his definition of the term magic, explicitly used characteristics of ancient Egyptian religion in defining his term; i.e., magic was what the ancient Egyptian religion was. 187 Frazer’s definition of magic was then used by Egyptologists to show (surprise!) that Egyptian religious practices were full of “magic.” 188 This circular reasoning has not been generally noted or recognized by either Egyptologists or anthropologists, who have unintentionally doomed the Egyptians to be perpetual pariahs, since they have made Egyptian religion magic by definition. Perhaps this can be best illustrated in two books by Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis Budge. In his book on Egyptian Religion, Budge included “the principal ideas and beliefs held by the ancient Egyptians concerning the resurrection and the future

---


188 Noted in Ritner, Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, 9–10.
life.”¹⁸⁹ In other words, that which “closely resembles in many respects the Christian religion of to-day” was religion, while the part of Egyptian religion that had a “non-Christian aspect” which Budge felt belonged “to a savage or semi-savage state of existence” he put in a book he entitled *Egyptian Magic*.¹⁹⁰ The ancient Egyptian religion was doomed from the start.

The other aspect of the problem with defining *magic* was the peculiar correlation of the beliefs of the scholars making the definitions with the content of their definitions. With the exception of a few individuals like D. Michael Quinn,¹⁹¹ most scholars define *magic* in such a way as not to include their own beliefs and practices. The “emphasis on religion as a system of beliefs, and the distinction between prayer and spell, the former being associated with ‘religious’ behaviour and the latter with ‘magical’ acts, was a Protestant legacy which was automatically taken over by later Victorian theorists like Tylor and Frazer, and given a universal significance as both historical and analytical categories useful in tracing the intellectual development of mankind from savagery to civilization.”¹⁹² Sir Edward Tylor, called by some “the Father of Anthropology,” came from a “non-conformist Quaker parentage and background which gave him a strong aversion to religious ritual of the kind displayed in Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. He had no feeling for what religion, particularly public, organized, ritualized religion, meant to the worshippers themselves.”¹⁹³ Tylor “was a social evolutionist with a profound commitment to the science of social development.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, for him, “‘magical arts,’ witchcraft and the ‘occult sciences’ (as he called them), whenever they were encountered in the civilized European societies, [were] survivals from a barbarous past . . . which they were destined to discard altogether,” and he defined

¹⁹³ Ibid., 43.
¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 43–44.
"magic" accordingly. Tylor "does not attempt to make a clear distinction between magic and religion but is content to claim 'as a minimum definition of Religion, the belief in Spiritual Beings', and to leave the rest of the supernatural to magic." Sir James Frazer was, like Tylor, part of the "British Victorian intellectual establishment," and borrowed his ideas about "magic" essentially from Tylor. Bronislaw K. Malinowski, a native of Poland who was influenced by positivistic theories while a student, held views on religion that "were a mixture of derivative Christian theology and pragmatist considerations akin to the doctrines of William James that however threatened to deteriorate into crude utilitarianism," and these views are reflected in his theories on magic. The most positivistic definition surveyed here is that of Ritner, an agnostic from a Presbyterian background. So, the Egyptologist Herman te Velde notes, "The word magic is often used simply to label actions, sayings, and ideas that do not seem reasonable from a Western positivistic or Christian point of view." Stanley Tambiah, in his important book, Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality, tries to show how it is not coincidental that most of the major theoreticians of "magic" have been positivistic Protestants who have defined "magic" in such a way as not to include their own beliefs. "Thus, 'magic' is relegated to the 'they' side of a 'we/they' dichotomy. This is simultaneously unfair to the materials and practices studied under the heading of 'magic,' and self-serving for the materials (mainly those we identify as 'our own') that are exempted from that label. It perpetuates a complacent double standard."

195 Ibid., 45-47.
197 Tambiah, Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality, 42.
198 Ibid., 65-70; the quotation is from 70.
D. Michael Quinn is the oddity, for though he did give more consideration to theoretical concerns than Ashment, the Tanners, and most other anti-Mormons, his definition not only deliberately encompasses what was then his own religion, but many others as well. Yet Quinn reverses the double standard: He only applies the pejorative label to his former religion, but not to any others. Consider how Quinn’s definition of “magic” applies to the prayer through which a born-again Christian becomes saved: It is “the use of means [prayer] that are believed to have supernatural power to cause a supernatural being [God] to produce or prevent a particular result [salvation and damnation respectively] considered not obtainable by natural means [works].”201 Therefore, by Quinn’s definition, the prayer through which one becomes born again is magic. Christ’s grace also fits his definition since Quinn also includes any “extraordinary power or influence seemingly202 from a supernatural source.”203 Now note the connotations that Quinn infuses into his use of the word. Someone who practices magic (our born-again Christian) looks at the world through the “magic world view,” which is “animistic.”204 He (or she) uses “special words, signs, numbers.”205 For the magician (our born-again Christian), “no event is ‘accidental’ or ‘random,’ but each has its chain of causation in which Power . . . was the decisive agency.”206 And though he may find his religion


202 One could quibble with the word “seemingly,” since to believers such as Mormons and born-again Christians, grace not only seems to come, but actually does come from a supernatural source. To a nonbeliever, however, the word seems apt. Since the word need not imply falseness, I intend it in the broadest sense here.

203 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, xi

204 Ibid., xii. This notion of animism in religion can be traced back to Tylor (see Evans-Pritchard, “Intellectualist [English] Interpretation of Magic,” 285) and perhaps further (Kieckhefer, Magic in the Middle Ages, 13–14).

205 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, xii.

"both emotionally satisfying and rational" this is only a "perceived rationality." 207 Do not be deceived; the magician (our born-again Christian) practices something that "being by definition false or wicked, or both, couldn't possibly be confused with 'religion,' "208 since it is nothing but "a crude aggregate of superstitions."209 Even if he thinks his is a religion, it can "scarcely differ from magical arts and incantations"210 since it involves "supernatural coercion, intricate rituals, and efforts to understand the otherworldly and ineffable."211 Our poor born-again Christian finds himself inextricably involved with one of the things he wanted to be saved from, just by trying to become saved. Now, I do not believe for a moment that born-again Christians actually fit this sordid portrait of animistic satanic superstitious pagans that Quinn paints, any more than Catholics, Mormons, or ancient Egyptians do. That is the point: Quinn's definitions of "magic" are a theoretical nightmare that irreparably flaw his book to the point of worthlessness. I fail to comprehend why any born-again Christian—as the Tanners ostensibly are—or any religious person, for that matter, would find Quinn's book useful, since it condemns not only Mormonism, but nearly every other religion, under the vituperative label of "magic."

Given the theoretical confusion over the term magic among the scholars, one must ask what the person using the term means by it. Otherwise we are simply following a definition by accusation: a practice is magic because someone, anyone, anywhere, anytime, for any reason, says so. Consider Jerald and Sandra Tanner's use of the term magic in some of their works. In a book devoted to "magic," they begin by simply stating that "the Smith's [sic] were charged with being involved in money digging

207 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, xii.
211 Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, xiv.
and magic practices."212 They do not define what it means for a practice to be "magic" although they do define "necromancy,"213 "crystallomancy,"214 and "divining."215 Their functional definition of "magic" seems to be that if an object once possessed by someone, or any detail in any rumor told about someone, "reminds us [the Tanners] of something we might read in a magic book"216 then the owner of the object or the subject of the rumor must have been involved in "magic practices." For example, they compare a "magic circle" with a Hofmann forgery (the fake Anthon transcript) because they "suspect there may be a connection to magic" and are certain that the nonexistent Oliver Cowdery history (another fabrication of Hofmann popularized by Brent Lee Metcalfe on hearsay) "contained MAGIC CHARACTERS!"217 Sometimes the connection with "magic" is established by simple assertion: "The original parchments were painted in various colors. Each of these colors is important to those who believe in magic."218 Of course, the same may be said of the Sistine Chapel, but that does not make it magical. (To show how silly this is, we should note that the Tanners publish books in various colors, each of which is important to those who believe in magic.) Elsewhere they inform us that "knives play a very important part in magic rituals."219 Knives, however, also play a very important part in cooking, but the sim-

212 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1983), 1.
213 The pretended art of divination through communication with the dead" in ibid., 22. Presumably, actual communication with the dead is not necromancy.
214 "Crystallomancy is a method of divination by the crystal which gave its answers whether pyramidal, cylindrical, or any other manufactured shape of crystal. Or else it was done by means of pieces or kinds of crystal enclosed in rings, or else enclosed in some vase, and cylindrical or oval in shape, in which the devil feigns and makes it seem as though he were in it." Tanner and Tanner, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, 27, citing Theodor Besterman, Crystal-Gazing, 3.
215 "DIVINING, the faculty of feeling or discovering water." Tanner and Tanner, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, 29, citing The Divining Rod (1894), 1.
216 Tanner and Tanner, Mormonism, Magic and Masonry, 37.
217 Ibid., 42–46, emphasis in original.
218 Ibid., 6.
219 Ibid., 15.
ple possession of a knife—even a decorated one—does not make its owner a magician any more than mere possession of a Book of Mormon makes one a Mormon, or the mere possession of a Bible makes one a Christian.\textsuperscript{220} The Tanners are never clear on what “magic” is and whether the treasure-digging practices they accuse Joseph Smith of\textsuperscript{221} are “magic” in their sense, or whether Joseph Smith would have thought them to be “magic” or “occult practices;”\textsuperscript{222} instead, they are satisfied simply to accuse Joseph Smith of “magic,” whatever that may be. Since they have given no grounds for what constitutes “magic,” their accusations that Joseph Smith practiced it are groundless, and their evidence consists mostly of hearsay, ambiguous or dubious objects, innuendo, or blatant forgeries.\textsuperscript{223}

\textsuperscript{220} It would be tempting to see the Tanners as the unintentional source of Mark Hofmann’s infamous “Salamander Letter,” since they seem to be the first to link a “fairy, sylph, or salamander” (ibid., 23) with Joseph Smith, treasure digging (ibid., 18–20), Martin Harris (ibid., 24–25, 38, 42), the Book of Mormon (ibid., 21–29), guardians of treasures (ibid., 39–42), and slipping treasures (ibid., 24–25, 31–32, 36, 37–39). But it may just be coincidence. The Tanners’ book seems to predate the “Salamander Letter,” according to the information given in Linda Sillitoe and Allen D. Roberts, \textit{Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders} (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1988), 273–77. This may not, however, have any basis in fact. Ashment used similar reasoning in his arguments about the publication and influences of the articles he is responding to—and got the story all wrong.

\textsuperscript{221} Joseph Smith himself discusses “the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger” (Joseph Smith—History 1:56) and classifies it as one of “the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons” (Joseph Smith—History 1:1). I do not know whether he would have included this as one of his “foolish errors, . . . the weakness of youth and the foibles of human nature,” but he did say that, “in making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). The Tanners seem to disagree. But then, again, for the Tanners simply being a Mormon is a great and malignant sin.

\textsuperscript{222} The charge is in Tanner and Tanner, \textit{Mormonism, Magic and Masonry}, 55.

\textsuperscript{223} Studies about Joseph Smith’s connection with “magic” were common in the mid-1980s, but most of them are flawed with the explicit or implicit use of Hofmann forgeries. There needs to be a careful examination of this question using primary source materials rather than secondary source materials, and paying careful attention to both the definitions and attitudes of various writers on “magic.” This is beyond the scope of this essay.
Just as one cannot take scholarly labels or modern accusations of "magic" at face value, one can also not take ancient accusations of "magic" necessarily at face value. Any one of the following: keeping chaste, performing rituals in the name of Christ, the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, initiation rites, leaving a room that has been locked, miracles, or being a stranger, could be considered sufficient for an accusation of magic in the ancient world.\textsuperscript{224} Marrying a rich widow was sufficient reason for Sicinius Aemilianus to accuse Apuleius of Madaurus of being a magician.\textsuperscript{225} Consider also the use of terms for magic in the Coptic martyrdom of Serapion. The soldiers come to haul Serapion from prison to stand before the magistrate, where they say they have caught him practicing magic in his dungeon cell because "they found the saint standing praying."\textsuperscript{226} In turn, the Christians considered anyone who worshipped "Apollo and Zeus and Athena and Artemis" to be a "magician."\textsuperscript{227} If simply praying can be considered practicing "magic" then the term has little substance. Time and again, Quinn and the Tanners classify a practice as "magic" simply because someone, somewhere, sometime considered the practice to be "magic."\textsuperscript{228} The \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} has accurately assessed the connotations of the use of the English term in its definition: "The pretended art of influencing the course of events, and of producing marvelous physical phenomena, by processes \textit{supposed} to owe their efficacy to their power of \textit{compelling} the intervention of spiritual beings, or of bringing into operation some \textit{occult} controlling principle of nature; \textit{sorcery}, \textit{witchcraft}."\textsuperscript{229} This definition almost screams opprobrium; indeed, the pejorative connotation of the term gen-

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\end{thebibliography}
erally overshadows any substantive meaning in its usage. We have seen how Quinn takes a fairly innocuous definition and heaps censure and innuendo on it; Tylor is no different, considering magic (anything supernatural other than a belief in spiritual beings) "one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind." 230 "At the root of the problem is the loaded, evaluative connotation of 'magic' as false, deceptive, discredited, or morally tainted, contrasted with both science (a correct, enlightened understanding of natural law and causation) and religion (a correct, enlightened understanding of the divine and spirituality)." 231 Given the loaded nature of the English term, what, if anything, is to be gained by using the term magic in scholarly discourse? 232

It is thus little wonder that, as an English term in scholarly discourse, the term magic has become vacuous and meaningless.

The use of the term "magic" tells us little or nothing about the substance of what is under description. The sentence, "X is/was a magician!" tells us nothing about the beliefs and practices of X; the only solid information that can be derived from it concerns the speaker's attitude toward X and their relative social relationship—that X is viewed by the speaker as powerful, peripheral, and dangerous. 233

The term thus usually classifies the person who uses it rather than the person of whom it is used. Back in 1933 the distinguished anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard reported, "What is important is that all students in the same field should use key terms like

---


232 I have asked colleagues, professors, and other scholars why they insist on branding cultures and religions that they study, love, and are deeply concerned for with such a stigmatic slur and have yet to receive a satisfactory answer.

233 Gager, Curse Tablets and Binding Spells, 25.
magic and religion with the same meaning.\textsuperscript{234} Yet since that time the number of definitions has mushroomed, but the persuasiveness of those definitions has diminished.

There is a growing consensus in the social sciences that, since there are no objective criteria for distinguishing magic from ritual, “magic” is useless as a classificatory term. In some ways, we are inclined to think it worse than useless. It is so frequently pejorative in connotation, and its polemical potential is so high, that it tends to draw its users away from the standards of objectivity that the social sciences claim to espouse.\textsuperscript{235}

And even in particular instances, “a broadly conceived theoretical dichotomy between ‘magic’ and ‘religion’ is not . . . of any great help in analyzing and evaluating the peculiar cultural phenomenon presented in the early Greek defixiones.”\textsuperscript{236} The term magic, both historically and currently, is generally used simply as a club with which one beats one’s religious opponents over the head.\textsuperscript{237} Scholars have nothing to gain by using the term and, thus, it should be dropped from scholarly usage. While scholars—like Ritner—who are extremely careful in specifying its definition

\textsuperscript{234} Evans-Pritchard, “Intellectualist (English) Interpretation of Magic,” 311.


\textsuperscript{236} Faraone, “The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells,” 20.

whenever used and meticulously sticking to that definition might be able to make a case for usage of the term, the risks of misunderstanding and misuse of them seem too high, while the non-polemical benefits seem nonexistent. The application of the term magic to Egyptian religious texts scattered through the Greco-Roman world has produced a witch-hunt conducted by ancient historians throughout Greco-Roman antiquity, looking for groups of wandering magicians that never existed. Chief among the witch-hunters have been Morton Smith and Hans Dieter Betz.

---

238 Note how Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 73, cites a passage from Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV, 33, but attributes it to a class of wandering magicians when Origen specifically attributes this practice to the Egyptians. The text of Origen is cited above.

239 Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 78–80, 84–91.

240 Betz, “Introduction,” in Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, xliiv–xlviii. Among his more classic wrong-headed attempts are (1) Hans D. Betz, “The Delphic Maxim ‘Know Yourself’ in Greek Magical Papyri,” *History of Religions* 21/2 (November 1981): 156–71. The problem is noted on ibid., 157: “Why the PGM should have become interested in the Delphic maxim is far from self-evident.” The real solution is that the PGM is interested in Egyptian religious practices and not the Delphic maxim since the papyri are Egyptian not Greek; thus “the maxim is never quoted verbatim” (ibid.) because it is not quoted at all. Telling is Fowden’s criticism in *Egyptian Hermes*, 87 n. 54: “Magicians had no need of philosophers to tell them that it was possible to identify oneself with and constrain the gods—least of all in Egypt.” (2) Hans D. Betz, “Fragments from a Catabasis Ritual in a Greek Magical Papyrus,” *History of Religions* 19/4 (May 1980): 287–95, where Betz would like to identify PGM LXX (=P. Mich. III, 154, a third- or fourth-century A.D. papyrus) as based on the initiations of the Idaean Daedyls. Betz ignores the provenance of the papyri in his discussion, and his source criticism remains vague about what exactly the sources are and how they are woven together. What the Idaean Daedyls might be doing in Egypt, he never says. One strongly suspects that this is another Egyptian text that Betz thinks is Greek. (3) In Hans D. Betz, “Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri,” in Faraone and Dirk, eds., *Magika Hiera*, 244–59, after a discussion of the problems in defining magic, Betz concludes that “good reasons exist for the fact that no one definition appears acceptable to everyone at this time” (ibid., 247), and declares, “whatever magic may be, the magical papyri have plenty of it” (ibid., 248), thus defining magic as what is in the PGM. Betz, though he knows of the arguments that the PGM are Egyptian (ibid., 248–49), ignores them on the grounds that they might have been “perhaps brought in by Greek settlers in Egypt” (ibid., 249, emphasis added). When the Egyptians wrote about their mysteries in Greek, they borrowed the terminology from the Greek mystery cults.
Witch-hunting through the Ancient World

Robert Morton Smith was born in 1915, and, after getting a doctorate from Harvard Divinity School, traveled to Jerusalem. Being unable to leave throughout World War II, he worked on another doctorate.\(^{241}\) He became an Episcopal priest but left his parish in 1957.\(^{242}\) By 1958, when he made his manuscript discoveries at Mar Saba, he had lost his faith.\(^{243}\) After that time he began what one of his reviewers described as “a scholarly program” wherein “the use of emotionally charged language shows a purpose that is more polemical than scientific.” “The publishing program of Morton Smith seems to be to discredit Christianity.”\(^{244}\) When I met Morton Smith, in the last year of his life, he was a recalcitrant and bitter old man who thought that anyone who disagreed with his work was a Christian apologist and not a scholar.\(^{245}\) I can only second the words of O. C. Edwards: “I would be very interested to learn how this parish priest of the 1940s came so to oppose the religion in which he was ordained.”\(^{246}\)

Morton Smith's major witch-hunting work was his infamous book, *Jesus the Magician*. The picture of Jesus depicted in

---


3. Smith, *The Secret Gospel*, 10; contrast this with his fascination of seventeen years earlier that he describes on pp. 1–6.


5. Readers of *RBBM* will note similarities to other individuals prominently figuring in present and previous issues.

Smith’s book has made many Christians feel uncomfortable. Smith, after all, depicted Jesus as a vagabond and a huckster, as homosexual and cannibalistic.247 The reviewers took him to task because “he excludes by assumption the possibility that traditional orthodox Christian belief is true.”248 and “his ignorance of current Gospel research is abysmal.”249 “When the outsider’s view is given precedence to the point that it becomes the criterion for judging the rest of the evidence, one feels a need to object. . . . The fact that somebody is accused of such performances [sorcery and magic] does not necessarily mean that the charge was true, but only that the group must protect itself from misrepresentation.”250 However much Smith—who lost his own faith somewhere in the forties or fifties—may have delighted in tweaking the noses of the faithful, it is his fallacious theoretical framework, his problematic methodology, and his methodical manhandling of the evidence that should cause any scholar to be wary of his book. Smith’s example of a vagrant magician (other than Jesus) is Apollonius of Tyana, a traveling Greek sophist of the first century.251 His examples of a magician’s spells are taken from third-century manuscripts of Egyptian religious texts (the PGM).252 Besides attributing Egyptian religious practices to a Greek, Smith assigns them a prominent place in influencing Jesus on the following grounds: (1) The documents mention Christ.253 (2) Similar techniques were used in the Jewish Sepher ha-Razim.254 (3) The Babylonian Talmud claims that Jesus went to Egypt and

247 The picture is most graphically painted in Smith, Jesus the Magician, 67; for cannibalism, see also ibid., 52–53, 66, 146; for the huckster, see also ibid., 60; for the promiscuity, see also ibid., 66.
248 Edwards, review of Smith, Jesus the Magician, 516.
250 Sean Freyne, review of Smith, Jesus the Magician, in Catholic Biblical Quarterly 41 (1979): 659. Anti-Mormons and a few so-called historians could learn something from this, but probably will not.
251 Herbert J. Rose, “Apollonius (12),” in OCD 86.
252 Smith, Jesus the Magician, 97–139, with notes on pp. 192–206.
253 Ibid., 63–64.
254 Ibid., 125.
studied under the magicians there.255 Let us consider each of these in order.

The documents mention Christ. Yes, on two counts: First the documents of the Anastasi priestly archive mention Christ.256 Second, in places Egyptian practices were retained by later Christians and incorporated into their Christianity or folk practices.257 The rituals that mention Christ in the first set of documents are worth looking at because they tell us some things about the Christianity of second- or third-century Thebes. But does the adoption of Christian rituals and deities long after the death of Jesus by the Egyptians, who had no aversion to adopting any one of a number of foreign deities, prove that Jesus was influenced by Egyptian religion? Hardly.258

Similar techniques were used in the Jewish Sepher ha-Razim. But the Sepher ha-Razim is a set of medieval manuscripts found in the Cairo Geniza, in the middle of Egypt.260 Margoliouth, the first editor, said of the author of the Sepher ha-Razim: “he is influenced especially by the scribes of the Greek magical writings,” i.e., the PGM, which are actually Egyptian.261 We know it borrows from prayers in Greek because it quotes them in transliteration.262 Yet this Greek prayer addresses Helios, the sun god, as riding in a boat, which is not Greek but Egyptian. It is clear that whoever in the Jewish community in Egypt wrote this manuscript borrowed from their Hellenized Egyptian neighbors some things which they used to produce this work of late antiquity. It is unclear why this

255 Ibid., 47.
256 PGM IV.1233; XIII.289; cf. PGM XLIV.18.
258 Quirke, Ancient Egyptian Religion, 113–14.
259 Noted also in Freyne, review of Smith, Jesus the Magician, 660.
261 Ibid., 23. the full discussion is on pages 1–16
262 Ibid., 12–16.
should be used as a document illustrative of the life of Jesus in the first century.264

The Babylonian Talmud claims that Jesus went to Egypt and studied under the magicians there.265 Why a piece of anti-Christian scholarly gossip of eighth-century Babylon, that is not even sure about the name of the individual about whom the rumor speaks, should serve as the basis of a historical theory of first-century Palestine somehow escapes me.266

Morton Smith's treatment of certain important pieces of evidence also leads one to distrust his book. Consider his treatment of the famous correspondence between Pliny and Trajan about the Christians267 that he claims he is taking "as it is usually taken, at face value."268 Where in this correspondence are the references to "magical spells," Jesus as a "demon," and cannibalism that Morton Smith finds there?269 Professor Smith then uses this evidence read into the text to "clearly show what opinion the Roman authorities had formed of Christianity; they thought it was an organization for the practice of magic."270 There may well have been Roman authorities who so thought, but the Pliny/Trajan correspondence is not evidence for that idea. Given the theoretical muddle, methodological nightmare, and tortured evidence in this particular work of Morton Smith, it has only a very limited value.

Why have I spent so much time in this review essay on the work of the late unrepentant old crank, Morton Smith? It is because Jerald and Sandra Tanner ironically rely heavily on Morton Smith's flawed presentation (even if they "disagreed with his conclusion"), because they felt that "Professor Smith presented a great deal of material concerning the type of magical

264 Compare the complaint of Freyne, review of Smith, Jesus the Magician, 659.
265 Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 104b. See the discussion in Ricks and Peterson, "Joseph Smith and 'Magic,' " 145 n. 23.
266 Compare the complaint of Freyne, review of Smith, Jesus the Magician, 659.
268 Ibid.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid.
papyri we are dealing with here." Unfortunately, little of that information is accurate or reliable. Because Ashment and the Tanners rely on sources that have misunderstood the papyri, their discussions are likewise flawed.

"Abraham" in Greco-Roman Egypt

Consider further what Ashment’s and the Tanners’ arguments about the Joseph Smith Papyri and the Anastasi priestly archive amount to. First they argue that the Joseph Smith Papyri can have no genuine connection to the book of Abraham because they are nothing but pagan magical documents from the archives of priests of Greco-Roman period Thebes. Then, when the name Abraham appears in Egyptian documents, they argue that these documents can have nothing to do with either the Joseph Smith Papyri or the book of Abraham because they are nothing but pagan magical documents from the archives of priests of Greco-Roman period Thebes. Setting aside for the moment the question of whether or not any of the documents has anything to do with the book of Abraham, if a scholar wanted to do research on the writings of the priests of Greco-Roman period Thebes, it would only make sense to study all of their archives together. The hysterical touchiness of some on this subject is astonishing. The


272 If the generally accepted date of the Joseph Smith Papyri is accurate, this can simply be limited to the Roman Period. Although the date of the Joseph Smith Papyri is not usually disputed, Jan Quaegebaer has pointed out that all Books of Breathings need to be redated perhaps as much as 300 hundred years earlier. The current paleographic dating of the papyri to the Roman period does not have a sound basis; see Jan Quaegebaer, “Demotic Inscriptions on Wood from the Tomb of ‘Anch-Hor,” in Manfred Bietak and Elfriede Reiser-Haslauer, Das Grab des ‘Anch-Hor, Obermeister der Gottesgemahlin Nitokris, 3 vols. (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), 2:264, esp. n. 512: "The dating of the late funerary papyri needs a more detailed discussion. A prosopographical study of the Theban priests in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods based on all available sources could shed new light on this problem." Furthermore, Hugh Nibley’s argument, The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 3–6, that the papyri come from the Soter cache is not certain. Until the date of the Joseph Smith papyri is reexamined, all arguments must be tentative.
appearance of the name *Abraham* in a Greco-Roman period Egyptian priestly archive from Thebes does not prove that the book of Abraham is authentic; it proves merely that Greco-Roman period Egyptian priests in Thebes knew something about Abraham. That a Greco-Roman period priest wrote the name *Abraham* directly underneath a lion-couch scene and noted that they should both be copied together may simply be coincidence—why it is there has never been satisfactorily explained—but the idea of connecting a lion-couch scene found in a Greco-Roman period Egyptian papyrus from Thebes with Abraham can no longer be dismissed as absurd, as critics have done for years. Therein is and always has been the significance of the Anastasi priestly archive for the book of Abraham; not that the archive authenticates the book of Abraham—for it does not and no one has ever claimed that it did—but that it shows that the idea that a Greco-Roman period Egyptian priest might have had a copy of the book of Abraham is not completely out of the question.

The argument can actually be made stronger than this, though the Anastasi ritual archive plays no part. How a Greco-Roman period Egyptian priest might have obtained a copy of the book of Abraham and what the original language of the book of Abraham was are still open questions. In one of his more brilliant passages, Ashment suggests that the information about Abraham came into Egypt in the sixth century B.C. with Jewish refugees from the destruction of Jerusalem. This may well be, but that was certainly neither the first nor the only influx of Jews into Egypt. There were waves of Jewish immigrants into Egypt before the conquest of Jerusalem (594–589 B.C.), soon after the conquest of Jerusalem, during the Persian period (525–399 B.C.), during the reign of Ptolemy I (320–301 B.C.), during the Ptolemaic rule of Judah (301–200 B.C.), with the departure of Onias IV to Leontopolis (172 B.C.), and after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D., 70–73), to name just a few.\footnote{\textsuperscript{273} The list is taken from Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: The Struggle for Equal Rights* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1985), 1–28. Scattered references may be found in Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 443–44; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 58–59; Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, 85, 97–99, 102; Naphtali Lewis, *Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt: Case Studies in the Social...
during any one or any number of these immigrations into Egypt. By the Persian period transcriptions were made of at least parts of the Jewish scriptures into demotic script.\(^{274}\)

Nothing compels us to assume that the book of Abraham must necessarily have been written by Abraham in Egyptian and preserved in Egyptian hands the entire time; it may also have passed through the hands of Abraham’s posterity and been taken to Egypt only much later, where it was translated.\(^{275}\) Hecateus of Abdera (ca. 300 B.C.)—a major source for Manetho,\(^{276}\) Diodorus Siculus,\(^{277}\) and possibly Tacitus\(^{278}\)—“used . . . Egyptian sources to revise . . . Herodotus’ account of Egyptian history.”\(^{279}\)

---

\(^{274}\) P. Amherst 63; for a brief discussion with bibliography, see Gee, “La Trahison des Clercs,” 96–99. The paleography dates the text to the Persian period (Robert K. Ritner, personal communication); the archive it was found in contains texts of later date, showing that the text was an heirloom of some sort.

\(^{275}\) Since Joseph Smith originally stated that the book of Abraham was “a translation of some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands, from the Catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt” (Times and Seasons 3/9 [1 March 1842]: 704, capitalization standardized and emphasis added), it is conceivable that the writings are an ancient pseudepigraphon. The problem with viewing the book of Abraham as a pseudepigraphon is that this explanation cannot account for the name *Olis hem* being the name of a real place, especially since almost all knowledge of that time period vanished from the Old Babylonian Period until modern times; see William W. Hallo, “Simurrum and the Hurrian Frontier,” Revue Hittite et Asiatique 36 (1978): 75–76.


\(^{278}\) Ibid., 47.

\(^{279}\) Ibid., 49.
Hecateus had a positive assessment of Moses and Jews\textsuperscript{280} and knew of noncanonical traditions about Abraham, about which he wrote a book that is thought to have been "a major source behind Josephus' account of Abraham."\textsuperscript{281} Even if the traditions about Abraham are assigned to a Pseudo-Hecateus rather than Hecateus of Abdera, they must date to the first century A.D. at the very latest. If "it is best to postulate Egyptian provenance for the original story" for the Testament of Abraham, and "it seems best to assume a date for the original of c. A.D. 100, plus or minus twenty-five years,"\textsuperscript{282} what is so unusual about the mention of Abraham in third-century Egyptian papyri, or a papyrus manuscript of a nonbiblical book of Abraham dating to the end of the first century? But the Anastasi priestly archive does not prove that the book of Abraham is true, nor does it prove that it existed. The larger argument is basically independent of any evidence from the archive. What the Anastasi priestly archive shows is that Egyptian priests (in Thebes) freely borrowed from Jewish and Christian sources; thus they must have had some sort of access to them. This does not tell us necessarily what those sources were, or when these sources came into Egypt (although it does provide a \textit{terminus ante quem}), or what sort of shape those sources were in.

Asking what the Egyptians of the Greco-Roman period knew about Abraham is a legitimate historical question. The Anastasi priestly archive is perfectly legitimate evidence for this historical question. The book of Abraham also fits into this historical question and seems to fit into the other evidence. A minimal historical argument from this is that the existence of a book of Abraham in Egypt at the time the Joseph Smith Papyri were produced is well within the scope of reasonable scholarship. If the critics wish to attack an argument, this is the argument they should attack.


\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 905; Jacoby, "Hekataios," 2767–68. See also Josephus, \textit{Antiquities of the Jews} I, 518, 161, 165–66; and Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Stromata} V, 14, 113.

Mumbo-Jumbo

In retrospect, Ashment's argument that the names are nothing but magical gibberish is actually a step backwards. “It is often, and incorrectly, assumed that the ‘barbarous names’ found in Egyptian and Greco-Egyptian magical texts are meaningless. This may sometimes be the case, but often they are anagrams of divine names which have been ‘cut up’ or scrambled. Merely because we cannot comprehend them except in terms of some quasi-sociological function does not signify that they are nonsense.”283 In the general field of the history of religion, it has been argued that “magical” words are not nonsense.284 No less than Adolf Erman showed that a whole section of what had been thought nonsense was actually Old Coptic.285 More recent work has brought some impressive interpretations of this mumbo-jumbo to light.286 While not all of these interpretations are equally convincing, the burden should lay on the critic to come up with a better explanation or some cogent reasons why the interpretation does not work. Claiming that it is all nonsense is not a better explanation. One might argue that certainly the long strings of vowels are meaningless, but an ancient author notes that “in Egypt the priests, when singing hymns in praise of the gods, employ the seven vowels, which they utter in due succession; and the sound of these letters is so euphonious that men listen to it in place of flute and lyre.”287 (This is, by the way, another indication that the PGM are documents of Egyptian priests.)

287 Demetrius, De elucutione, fragment 71, cited in Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 118–19. Contrast this with the confused discussion of Patricia C.
The Anastasi priestly archive has one of the more intriguing parallels to the phenomenon of book of Abraham names. *P. Leiden I* 395 ( = *PGM* XIII, called the “Eighth Book of Moses”) 160–61 contains the following statement: “The nine-formed one greets you in hieratic: *menephōiphōth*. When he says that he means: I come unto thee, O Lord (*proaγo sou kyrie*).”288 This is worth noting because, here, in a papyrus owned by an Egyptian priest who knew hieratic, is written a word explicitly identified as hieratic, yet no one has yet been able to come up with a phrase in any phase of the Egyptian language that matches both the phonetics and meaning identified in the papyrus. So long as these sorts of parallel texts are to be found in authentic Egyptian documents, we cannot dismiss words in the book of Abraham as being inauthentic just because we do not understand them.

### The Pupil of the Wedjat-Eye

One of the subsidiary issues raised in the publication of the preliminary reports was that the name *Abraham* can be plausibly connected with hypocephali inasmuch as Abraham is called “the pupil of the wedjat-eye” in one of the passages. Ashment objects to equating the hypocephalus with the pupil of the wedjat-eye (pp. 14–16), though—since even sometime “Mormon” turned anti-Mormon pseudo-Egyptologist Dee Jay Nelson entitled his study of Facsimile 2, *Joseph Smith’s “Eye of Ra”*289—I suspect

---


that if it were not mentioned in connection with Abraham in PDM xiv he would have no particular problem. Ashment rejects the argument that Book of the Dead 162–67 are closely related (pp. 15–16), citing a study by Malcolm Mosher that indicates that these chapters are not connected in the Memphite tradition, but only in the Theban tradition. Ashment’s objection, however, is not valid since both P. Leiden I 383 and the Joseph Smith Papyri came from Thebes, not Memphis. Since the manuscripts come from Thebes and not Memphis, it would only make sense to follow the Theban tradition where these texts are related. (Hypoccephali themselves are also thought to be part of “specifically local traditions” centered at Thebes: “The custom of making hypoccephali is propagated exclusively among the members of the Theban clergy,” thus becoming “an exclusive funerary custom.”) The main reason, however, for thinking that the “pupil of the wedjat-eye” is to be connected with the hypocephalus comes from three hypoccephali (the restorations are those of Edith Varga):

---

290 Ashment also rejects this argument because none of these chapters are found all together in any one Book of the Dead. I readily concede the point, though I should point out that the argument in Gee, “Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts,” 61, 62 nn. 12–13, relies only on BD 162–64 being related. As will be shown later, even this argument is superfluous.


Musee Hungrois des beaux-Arts inv. L.009:
ink pr dfj m hnw n wdst
“I am the pupil [within the wedjat-eye].”

Turin 2323:
ink dfj m hnw m {wdst
“I and the pupil within [the wedjat-eye].”

B. M. 8445:
ink pr m wdst ink p[w] dfj=s
“I am he who came from the wedjat-eye; I am its pupil.”

While one can dispute Varga’s restorations in the first two instances, the third is unambiguous. Varga has shown what is crucial here: The pupil of the wedjat-eye is the god associated with the hypocephalus. Using a hypocephalus, “the deceased assumes the attributes of the divinity, they are his functions which he executes in order to share his departure and so that, at the daily rebirth of the sun, he himself is also reborn into the new life.”

This assumption of divinity is basic to Egyptian religion, as the effectiveness of the rites (“magical” or otherwise) is founded on the priest’s being a representation or representative of deity. The priest acts in the place of the god; this may be done in various ways, such as by placing a mask of the god on his head, or by simply declaring himself to be the god. The power that made this representation effective was called by the Egyptians $hk$299 a word

295 See Varga, “Le Fragment d’un hypocéphale égyptien,” 13. The rim inscription of BM 8445 is reproduced (albeit poorly) in Harris, Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, 77. Many thanks to Michael Lyon for allowing me to examine his collection of photographs of hypocephali to collate Varga’s assertions. The lacunae are filled by Varga with the exception of BM 8445. The lacuna on BM 8445 may be intact but it is difficult to tell from the photographs.


297 Ibid., 14.

298 Lexa, Magie dans l’Égypte antique, 1:56–58.

usually rendered by Egyptologists as “magic”300 or (rarely) as “supernatural power.”301 The imagery on the hypocephali is either derived from the nighttime journey of the sun in the Amduat (on the lower side) or from the iconography of Re-Kheperi, the morning sun (on the upper side). Thus the hypocephalus does not depict the cycle of the daily circuit of the sun, but is simply designed to get one through the long night of death until the morning of the resurrection.302 (Note that, though the sun rises daily, the resurrection occurs only once since the Egyptian wants to avoid dying a second time.) It is thus only appropriate that in Egypt, where the Christians would call the underworld “the bosom of Abraham,”303 Abraham would be called the pupil of the wedjat-eye. Ashment might wish to argue that the connection is coincidental, but to argue that it is nonexistent is untenable.

**Masks and Priests**

Ashment’s booklet also adds yet another item of bibliography to the completely irrelevant debate over whether the head of Figure 3 in Facsimile 1 of the book of Abraham has been restored properly (p. 13).304 The figure in Facsimile 1 has a bald human

---

300 Wh 3:175–77; the most recent discussion is in Ritner, Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, 14–28.
301 Wh 3:175–76.
303 This is a standard epithet on Christian tombstones in Egypt and Nubia deriving from Luke 16:22–23. See, for example, H. R. Hall, Coptic and Greek Texts of the Christian Period from Ostraka, Stelae, etc., in the British Museum (London: British Museum, 1905), 8, 10, 12.
head; the critics argue that it should be a jackal’s head. (Joseph Smith Papyrus I presently is missing the figure’s head.) This particular question—one on which Ashment has lavished his best work ever—305—is of absolutely no significance. To see why, consider the following:

(1) Assume for the sake of argument that the head on Facsimile 1 Figure 3 is correct. What are the implications of the figure being a bald man? Shaving was a common feature of initiation into the priesthood from the Old Kingdom through the Roman period.306 Since “Complete shaving of the head was another

---

mark of the male Isiac votary and priest. The bald figure would then be a priest.

(2) Assume on the other hand that the head on Facsimile 1 Figure 3 is that of a jackal, as was first suggested by Theodule Devéria. We have representations of priests wearing masks, one example of an actual mask, literary accounts from non-Egyptians about Egyptian priests wearing masks, and even a hitherto-unrecognized Egyptian account of when a priest would wear a mask. In the midst of the embalmment ritual, a new section is introduced with the following passage: "Afterwards, Anubis, the stolites priest (hry sšš) wearing the head of this god, sits

---

308 Devéria, "Fragments de manuscrits funéraires égyptiens," 1:196.
312 On hry-sšš as a stolites priest, see Jean-Claude Goyon, Rituels funéraires de l’ancienne Égypte (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972), 26 n. 1; see also Ritner, Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, 231–32. It has been argued that in the Late (Libyan through Roman) Period, the hry-sšš was the equivalent of the hry-hbt; see Philippe Derchain, "Miettes (suite)," Revue d’Égyptologie 30 (1978): 59–61; the passage cited here is evidence to the contrary. This title appears on Joseph Smith Papyrus I as one of the offices of Hor’s father, Wsr-wr (Osocrates), and was completely misunderstood in Dee Jay Nelson,
down and no lector-priest shall approach him to bind the stolites with any work." Thus this text settles any questions about whether masks were actually used. It furthermore identifies the individual wearing the mask as a priest.

Thus, however the restoration is made, the individual shown in Facsimile 1 Figure 3 is a priest, and the entire question of which head should be on the figure is moot so far as identifying the figure is concerned. The entire debate has been a waste of ink. It is ironic that the best work Ashment has ever produced, Egyptological or otherwise, has been spent on a point that makes no difference in the end. The question is not "whether or not Joseph Smith's reconstruction of the standing figure in his lion-couch vignette is accurate" (p. 13) but whether or not the figure is identified correctly as a priest. It is.

The Joseph Smith Papyri (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1968), 24–25, 44; as also by the Tanners in Case against Mormonism, 3:34.


314 ir hr-sinn hms pw ir.n lnp hry-sst; hr tp n ntr pn iw an tkny hry-hst nbt r=fr 3qy hry-tsht kwt nbt im=f P. Boulaq III 4/7–8 in Serge Sauneron, Rituel de l'Enbaument (Cairo: Imprimerie Nationale, 1952), 11. Though the text has been understood differently by others, it has generally been acknowledged that Anubis represents a "Priester im Kostüm des Anubis," so Günther Roeder, Urkunden zur Religion des alten Ägypten (Jena: Diederichs, 1915), 300. "Le maître des cérémonies est Anubis, supérior des mystères, c'est-à-dire le prêtre jouant le rôle d'Anubis;" thus Goyon, Rituels funéraires de l'ancienne Égypte, 26.

Conclusions

It would be very helpful in the future if those who write about "magic" and the "magical papyri" would get two fundamental issues clear in their minds: (1) Just what do we mean when we talk about "magic"? Would the people to whom we apply this label think that it fit? Would it make any sense to them? Is this an accepted usage of this term? What unexpected phenomena might be included under this term? What advantage, other than polemical, do we gain by using the term? (2) What are the "magical papyri"? What were they used for? What was their context? I would hope this review essay might go some way toward clarifying the former issue and settling the latter. What then is the relevance of this material to the book of Abraham?

The evidence from the Anastasi ritual archive does not settle the question of whether the book of Abraham is authentic. It has never been argued otherwise (except as a straw man by Ashment and the Tanners). Since "a proper historical question must be operational—which is merely to say that it must be resolvable in empirical terms," and since the veracity of certain aspects of the book of Abraham is not resolvable in empirical terms—asking whether the book of Abraham is true is not a question completely open to empirical historical inquiry. My question has been what the Egyptians of the Greco-Roman period (the broad historical period from whence the Joseph Smith Papyri came) knew about Abraham. It turns out that at least some knew a fair amount, and those that did know something seem to have had a favorable opinion of him. This merely indicates that the authenticity of the book of Abraham is possible, which is much different from declaring the book of Abraham authentic. The evidence simply leaves the question open (I suspect a bit too open for Ashment and the Tanners). Ashment and the Tanners err in thinking that any falsification of an anti-Mormon theory is necessarily apologetics or an attempt to prove that the book of Abraham (or the Book of Mormon for that matter) is true. In his booklet, Ashment has conjured up his favorite phantom—the theory that any Mormon scholar with whom he disagrees must be an apolo-

316 Fischer, Historians' Fallacies, 38.
gist—and summoned it to exorcise the name of Abraham from Egyptian texts. This is sleight of hand. Ashment and the Tanners have only been chasing chimeras, and though they pursue them with all the pseudoscientific expertise of the Ghostbusters, the results are theatrical rather than substantive since they have been pursuing shadow rather than reality. This review essay will hardly be the last word on the subject, but if any advance in knowledge in this area is going to be made, it will not come from indefensible theories and works like those Ashment has produced.


Bountiful Found

Reviewed by L. Ara Norwood

The world will prove Joseph Smith a true prophet by circumstantial evidence.

Joseph Smith

Not a great deal of literature impresses me these days. I read what some consider an inordinate amount of material every month, including an average of four books, plus about a half dozen magazines and journals, not to mention numerous letters, memorandums, and bulletins. Much of it is unoriginal, monotonous, and bland. So imagine my delight after picking up the Astons' publication! I found the work to be insightful, inspiring, and just plain interesting.

In The Footsteps Of Lehi begins with a prologue, which serves to give the readers a sense of the origin of the Astons' odyssey. We learn where and when they met, what their common goals and interests were in the early part of their marriage, and how those goals prompted much of their research. All of this serves to add a human element to the book and reminds us that we are dealing with normal everyday people like ourselves. Then follow three main sections of the book. Part One concerns the Astons' work in locating Nahom, where Ishmael was buried (see 1 Nephi 16:34).
Part Two deals with the place called Bountiful, where Nephi built his ship (see 1 Nephi 17:5–6). And finally, Part Three, which includes a 16-page section of 26 color photos on glossy paper, chronicles in very personal terms some of the inside details concerning their several expeditions to the Arabian coast in 1993.

This book is a valuable contribution to the literature on the Book of Mormon. The Astons have taken a serious interest in the place names described in 1 Nephi 16 and 17. This interest has galvanized them and has brought them closer to unlocking the heart of the matter than any previous researcher by putting them directly in touch with the land and the people of the area in question.

The Astons begin by discussing the limitations of any work of this kind. They do this so that the uninformed will not, with unchecked zeal, overstate the claims of their work after reading it. They write,

As compelling as the findings of this new research are, the most that any branch of science (including archaeology) can offer is plausibility, or in other words the likelihood that something is true. Ultimate "proof" of the Book of Mormon remains exactly what Moroni said it was more than fifteen centuries ago—spiritual confirmation from God after reading it, pondering, and then praying sincerely to know for ourselves. (p. 3, emphasis in original)

This is sound. Yet with that premise in mind, the Astons proceed to present very compelling evidence that the place the Book of Mormon calls Nahom bears an authentic place name still present

---

on the Arabian peninsula. They further show that neither Joseph Smith nor any person in New York living in the 1820s could have had access to the kind of information we find in the Book of Mormon, ergo Joseph Smith is a prophetic figure who translated an ancient document by the gift and power of God.

The areas of focus for the Astons relative to their research on Nahom include the following seven items: (1) Nahom was one place name that, unlike the valley of Lemuel, the river Laman, or Shazer, was not named by Lehi but rather was already so named prior to Lehi’s visit. Thus we should not be surprised if such a place can be located on ancient (or modern) maps; (2) the name itself is rare enough to be found nowhere else on the Arabian peninsula; thus no debate of which Nahom is the correct candidate need occur; (3) the etymology behind the word Nehem/Nahom suggests a striking correlation with the circumstances attending the Lehite party. In fact, even though there are two distinct Semitic roots behind the word, either of their meanings (“to comfort, console, to be sorry” vs. “to roar, complain, or be hungry”) is right at home with the Book of Mormon paradigm; (4) the dating of Arabia’s Nehem predates the time of Lehi’s sojourn; it would be strongly negative for the Astons’ hypothesis if this were not the case; (5) the presence of burial grounds in the Arabian Nehem correlates precisely with the Book of Mormon account that Ishmael was buried at Nahom; (6) the climate of today’s Arabia is not necessarily the same as the climate present in Lehi’s day. Thus, ancient Nehem may have had a milder climate supporting a greater population; (7) coming from Jerusalem, the trade routes in Arabia turn eastward at Nehem. This correlates perfectly with the Book of Mormon text as given by Nephi, who was on the trade route: “And it came to pass that we did again take our journey in the wilderness; and we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth” (1 Nephi 17:1). Again, this information could not be had by those living in Joseph Smith’s environment.

The conclusion by the Astons on the Nahom issue bears repeating: “The Book of Mormon reference to Nahom as an ancient place-name in southern Arabia can now truly be considered validated” (p. 25). I would heartily agree and would be
interested to see how the critics of the Book of Mormon respond to such evidence.²

In their treatment of Bountiful, the Astons scrutinize the text of the Book of Mormon for every clue they can attain about the place. They list twelve characteristics that should be present in any serious candidate for Bountiful (pp. 28–29). I hope that members of the Church who read their analysis will be as impressed as I was with such deep reading of the text.

The significance of the details in the Book of Mormon regarding Bountiful cannot be overstated:

By describing in such precise detail a fertile Arabian coastal location, as well as the route to get there from Jerusalem (complete with directions and even a place-name en route), Joseph Smith put his prophetic credibility very much on the line. Could this young, untraveled farmer in rural New York somehow have known about a fertile site on the coast of Arabia? Could a map or some writing other than the Nephite record have been a source for him? The answer is a clear no. (p. 29)

The Astons also rightly examine previous studies on the location of Bountiful. Of the six previously proposed candidates for Bountiful, they find that only one of the six, the Wadi Sayq in Oman, meets all of the criteria set forth by the text of the Book of Mormon itself. After describing why it was a largely unknown part of Arabia for so long, and after detailing their expedition, which led to the discovery of this land, the Astons write,

All of the effort and expense had been justified, we felt, with the discovery of Wadi Sayq, a place about which no literature made mention, no history was recorded,

² Most anti-Mormons claim that there is absolutely positively zero archaeological evidence supporting the Book of Mormon. This is even stated by critics who have read works by John Sorenson and others. In this genre, James White’s Letters to a Mormon Elder (Southbridge, MA: Crowne, 1990), 163–71, comes to mind, along with John Ankerberg and John Weldon’s Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Mormonism (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1992), 275, 282–90.
and no proper scientific investigation had ever been made. It was a great thrill also when we determined that Wadi Sayq lies almost exactly "eastward" of Nehem in Yemen. So far as Bountiful was concerned, Latter-day Saints could for the first time demonstrate that such a place did in fact exist, just as Nephi described twenty-six hundred years ago. (p. 53.)

Even more impressive is the way in which they conclude their findings with respect to both Nahom and Bountiful:

The first location, Nehem/Nahom, is unique in that it may well be a place-name recorded in the Book of Mormon that has survived to the present day, in addition to being associated to other aspects of Nephi’s account. The second, Wadi Sayq/Khor Kharfot, impressively fits Nephi’s detailed description of Bountiful in ways that no other place does. Further, it is directionally linked with Nehem just as 1 Nephi 17:1 requires. Locating such a precisely defined place anywhere in the world would be a remarkable thing, but to find a site (and only one) exactly matching the criteria in that most unlikely and barren of all regions—Arabia—must appeal to the honest in heart as compelling evidence that Nephi’s account is based on reality. (p. 58)

In reading this book, I found myself engrossed in two different styles. The Astons present their hard research on the Book of Mormon in a fascinating, arresting way. I appreciated their thoroughness, for as I absorbed their data, questions would invariably come into my mind—questions that were answered by them, usually within a few paragraphs. But another element is present in this book, and this is the personal style, the very valuable subjective element. In some places this book read almost like a novel; the details of their journeyings are almost as gripping as are Lehi’s. I found myself amazed, amused, curious, and filled with suspense at various times as I read of their encounters with the

3 My only lament about this book reflects my own shortcomings: I wish the book included an appendix with a pronunciation guide, inasmuch as many of the proper names were of uncertain pronunciation.
heat, the cliffs, bandits, armed guards, bats, mosquitoes, and a manacled madman. I was pleased to see so many figures and illustrations. I was especially impressed with the quality of the color photographs. The last two color photographs I found especially delightful, for it was with them that I was able to see the faces of Warren and Michaela Aston, along with their colleagues and friends. And I felt in reading their story that they had become my friends as well.

I highly recommend this book to those interested in evidence supporting the Book of Mormon as a divinely inspired ancient document, or anyone who is looking for a good read. I believe the Astons have done all of us a great service by tenaciously pursuing—and realizing—their goals and dreams. Their work may not silence those critics who are not honest in heart, but it will cause all seekers after truth to recognize that the descriptions of Nahom and Bountiful in the Book of Mormon are in complete harmony with what we now know of the Arabia of Lehi’s day.

Melodie Moench Charles and the Humanist Worldview

Reviewed by Ross David Baron

The title of Melodie Charles’s article is actually misleading. It gives the impression that a “theological interpretation of the person and work of Christ,”¹ as explicated in the Book of Mormon, will take place. This does not occur. What in fact eventuates is a recitation of isolated scriptures² to support what is evidently her preconceived notion about the Book of Mormon, namely, that it was not translated by the gift and power of God, but was the work of Joseph Smith.

This conclusion is never stated overtly but is implied throughout. Her stated thesis is that Book of Mormon christological concepts “or doctrines concerning Christ differ from the christology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since at least

¹ Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1986), s.v. “Christology.”
² For example, she cites 2 Nephi 31:10–16 only once. The citation, however, is in a footnote under the heading “Jesus as giver of the law,” 84 n. 1. These are verses, however, that deserve her exegesis as the Father and the Son are clearly seen as distinct beings. Also, 1 Nephi 11:11 is never mentioned; this verse distinctly shows a separate being as the Holy Ghost.
the 1840s" (p. 82). This assertion is based on her exegesis of the text with the intent to show that the Book of Mormon reflects the notions Joseph Smith had about the Godhead at the time of its translation. This shows, according to Charles, that the Book of Mormon was not translated from ancient plates, but is a modern work of fiction. She says, furthermore, that "some people—including committed RLDS and LDS Mormons [sic], and scholars without a bias for or against Mormonism—have suggested . . . that the Book of Mormon was not a record written by Near Eastern emigrants . . . but rather was authored by Joseph Smith" (p. 94). However, we never find out who these "committed" and "unbiased" RLDS and LDS people are.

Her footnotes are described by John A. Tvedtnes as "impressive," and are truly that. The problem is that many are inaccurate. As an example, in footnote 2 on page 84 she cites Mosiah 3:35; however, Mosiah chapter 3 has only 27 verses. Also, in footnote 26 (p. 99) under the heading "Christ as God of Book of Mormon people," she cites 4 Nephi 3:21; however, 4 Nephi only has one chapter. There are many more inaccuracies.

One more item as a preface to the heart of her arguments: She opens by quoting Mosiah 15:1-4, saying that she sees no way to "reconcile Abinadi's words with the current Mormon belief that God and his son Jesus Christ are separate and distinct beings" (p. 81). Her understanding therefore of these verses is that they are an interpretation by Abinadi of the unity of the Father and the Son; this is her interpretation. Robert L. Millet states, "This statement by Abinadi has very little to do with the Godhead—specifically with Elohim and Jehovah. It has very much to do with the person and powers of Christ. It is a statement of how his divinity is melded with his humanity to make redemption of the human

---


family available.5 This is not just the privately held view of Robert L. Millet. He is reflecting to one degree or another the understanding of these verses by other scholars and apostles. Appendix B is a comparison of the interpretations of these verses by Richard D. Draper, Bruce R. McConkie, Monte S. Nyman, Robert L. Millet, and the Book of Mormon (Religion 121–122) Student Manual.6 All of these authors disagree with the way in which Charles has interpreted the Mosiah 15:1–4 text.

Her study is broken down into four areas. These supply her four basic arguments. Each of the following numbers corresponds to the four parts of her article. Her reasoning is as follows:

1. The Book of Mormon contains detailed before-the-fact prophecies about Jesus Christ that are unparalleled in scripture. Also, the abundance of details about his life before he came is nonessential.

2. The expectations of the New Testament people concerning the Messiah were extremely different from those in the Book of Mormon.

3. The doctrine of the Godhead in the Book of Mormon closely resembles Sabellianism. The current teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regarding the Godhead are not Sabellianistic. The difference is attributed to Joseph Smith’s idea about the Godhead at the time of his translation.7

4. The Mormon doctrine about Jehovah being Jesus Christ and thus the God of the Old Testament is not supported in the Bible.

It must be remembered that the arguments outlined herein reflect her worldview.8 A person’s worldview drastically affects


7 Charles does not address what she says she will address. I have stated here what she in fact does argue.

8 Other words used to describe “worldview” are metaethical, cosmology, metaphysics, paradigm, or mental model.
beliefs about God, the afterlife, our purpose in life, ethics, and the way supernatural events are explained. Charles did not openly reveal her cosmology; however, there are clues in her paper. For example, regarding the New Testament, she states, “After the fact, believers tried to find Old Testament scripture to relate to unexpected aspects of Jesus’ life” (p. 92). That is one way to look at it. An alternative worldview would be that believers, inspired by the Holy Ghost, were enlightened in their understanding of the Old Testament and found prophecy fulfilled in the life of Jesus. She specifically notes that the apostle Paul made declarations about Christ and did not cite scripture in support of his statements (p. 92). This gives us insight into what she believes about prophets and revelation both ancient and modern. Her worldview precludes anyone from having knowledge of the future or enlightenment on the past if it is derived from God. Her exegesis of 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 on page 109 is a classic example of her worldview; namely, Paul “[added] details to the Old Testament story” (p. 109). Her perception is that Paul had to be adding his understanding to the Old Testament account; the possibility that he was inspired is not addressed. (Her analysis of 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 will be discussed in detail in part IV of this paper.) The lens through which we perceive the world colors the way we look at Christianity and Mormonism; her lens, however, is tinted with secularism and humanism. This must be kept in mind throughout.

9 Louis Midgley makes much the same point about Dale Morgan and Fawn Brodie regarding their naturalistic explanations for Mormon history. “Their naturalistic perspective rested upon the assumption that there is no God, hence claims to divine revelation must be explained as instances of conscious fraud, perhaps eventually mixed with elements of delusion or illusion.” Louis Midgley, “The Challenge of Historical Consciousness: Mormon History and the Encounter with Secular Modernity,” in By Study and Also by Faith, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:528 n. 6.

10 Her type of view is well summarized by Hugh Nibley: “[She] cannot conceive how anyone could possibly acquire knowledge by any method other than [hers]. [She] cannot believe that any man has experienced anything which [she] has not experienced. . . . ‘I have never seen a vision,’ says the scholar, ‘therefore, Joseph Smith never had one. I have seen dreams, therefore, I will allow him that.’ ” Hugh Nibley, The World and the Prophets, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 31.
One of the thinly veiled premises of her first argument is that there really cannot be detailed before-the-fact prophecy. According to Charles’s thinking, prophets are prophets of their time; they discuss issues that are familiar to them and their cultural surroundings. Before-the-fact prophecies do not fit into her worldview; therefore, they were made up by Joseph Smith and retrojected into supposedly earlier times. Her cosmology is similar to that of Rudolph Bultmann, who demythologized the events of the New Testament and the miracles of Jesus, including his atonement and resurrection. Nevertheless, her contention that the prophecies in the Book of Mormon are unparalleled is not true, even though certain Bible critics feel the same as she does. Norman K. Gottwald, for instance, said the following:

So far as we can determine, when [the prophecies are] studied in their contexts apart from dogmatic preconvention, no prophet leaped across the centuries and foresaw the specific person Jesus of Nazareth. It is a plain violation of historical context to think that they did so and in practice those who interpret the prophets as predictors of Jesus obscure the settings in which the prophets functioned.

People like Charles also advance the case, for example, that there is a First Isaiah and a Deutero-Isaiah. Why? One of the main reasons is because of Isaiah’s detailed before-the-fact prophecies. Victor L. Ludlow, an expert on Isaiah, rejects the Deutero-Isaiah theory. In relation to the later chapters of Isaiah he says they “mention specific events and people (for example, King Cyrus of Persia [Isaiah 44–45]) that did not exist until centuries after Isaiah. Since the historical critics [like Charles] hold that no individual can foretell the future, they believe that these chapters must have been written by someone contemporary with or later than the

---

person and events described." A figure in the Book of Mormon confronted believers with much the same argument. He spoke "against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ" (Alma 30:6). He further stated that the believers were "bound down" by this belief, which he termed a "foolish and a vain hope" (Alma 30:13). Also, "For no man can know of anything which is to come. Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers" (Alma 30:13–14).

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, Isaiah 44–45 contains clear, detailed, before-the-fact prophecies that were fulfilled hundreds of years later. Zechariah also, approximately 500 years before the fact, prophesied that "thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9). This prediction is specific and detailed with complete fulfillment in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 21:6–11, Mark 11:7–11, Luke 19:35–38, and John 12:12–18. Micah, approximately 700 years before the event, said, "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah . . . out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2). This is a clear announcement, more than half a millennium before the fact, of the location of the birthplace of the Lord. Even the chief priests and scribes knew that this specific and detailed before-the-fact scripture dealt with the Lord, for they quoted it to Herod (Matthew 2:4–6). The Savior himself quoted Isaiah 61:1–2 and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21; cf. 4:16–21). This is not a case of believers "after the fact" applying prophecy to the life of Jesus. This is Jesus applying a prophecy that was precise and particular, and uttered seven hundred plus years before. Therefore, suffice it to

---
say that her avowal that the prophecies in the Book of Mormon are unparalleled is unfounded.¹⁴

She discusses revelations in the Book of Mormon relative to the name of the Lord. "They received revelation that his name would be Jesus, Christ, or Jesus Christ" (pp. 85–86). Then in footnote 6 (p. 86) she states, "but 'Christ' was not Jesus' name" (emphasis in original). The Hebrew word for name is "shem" which also means the Name (as a designation of God) and fame and glory.¹⁵ This is precisely the way it was used in Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14, emphasis added). Jesus was not known by the name Immanuel during his life but this reflected the translation of the word name to mean "the Name as the designation of God." In like manner Isaiah uses the same Hebrew word in chapter 9 verse 6: "and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (emphasis added). Does she object to this prophecy as well because his name was not Wonderful and he was not known by the other prophetic appellations during his life? Of course these names indicated his fame, glory, and status as God. This is what the angel revealed to Jacob in 2 Nephi 10:3 when he said, "for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this [Christ] should be his name."

Charles makes many declarations about what Book of Mormon people believed.¹⁶ For example, she posits that Book of Mormon people did not really believe that Jesus "actually was mortal during his ministry on earth" (p. 84, emphasis in original). She then quotes part of 1 Nephi 11:28 about how this "supramortal" Jesus would minister in "power and great glory." However, she fails to cite the rest of the scripture; there it states that Book of Mormon people understood that "they cast him

¹⁴ Appendix A lists many Old Testament prophecies concerning his lineage and birth, mortal ministry, atonement and death, resurrection and divinity.
¹⁶ At one point she says that Book of Mormon people "living long before Jesus was born ... knew that ... [a] new star would appear when Jesus was born" (p. 85). "Long before" is here implicitly defined by Charles as six years. The only record of their knowing of a star was the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite in Helaman 14:5.
[Jesus] out from among them” (1 Nephi 11:28). That does not sound like a “supramortal.” She then states that “Book of Mormon people never encountered him as finite in any way” (p. 85, emphasis in original). But in Mosiah 3:7 Book of Mormon people encounter Jesus as having pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue. These are very mortal and finite descriptions. Book of Mormon people also knew that he would be a helpless child, that he would be “taken by the people,” “judged of the world,” and “lifted up upon the cross and slain” (1 Nephi 11:20, 32–33). Only mortals can die. Contrary to her statements, the faithful in the Book of Mormon believed, encountered, and knew that Jesus would come to the earth as God but that he was mortal during his life.

She caps off this section of her article by saying that the abundance of particulars in these prophecies for the Book of Mormon people are “nonessential details” and “have nothing to do with the redemption of humankind” (p. 89). Furthermore, these details, for Book of Mormon people, “would be only trivia” (p. 90). The details she is speaking of refer to the specifics of his birth and to the fact that the Savior would be accused of being possessed by the devil. These “nonessential details” are also recorded in the gospels. Her point is that the people of the Book of Mormon had them in advance in specifics that the New Testament inhabitants did not have.17 She argues that people in the Book of Mormon did not need them because they did not need to recognize the Savior when he came as a mortal. This argument, however, is beside the point. In fact, these prophecies and their details were there directly to increase the faith of the people of the Book of Mormon. They would not be given the opportunity of having the mortal Savior among them. The prophecies would allow them to see the mortal side of his life; he had a mother, he would be born in a specific location at a specific time, and he would be falsely accused—far from nonessential and trivial. It

17 The prophecies the New Testament people had are close to the prophecies of the Book of Mormon. For example, they knew the Savior would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), they knew he would be born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and they knew he would have a mortal mother (Isaiah 9:6). They also knew things that Book of Mormon prophets did not record. For example, the Savior would be taken to Egypt as a child (Hosea 11:1).
emphasized to them that Jesus the Christ was not a metaphor, myth, or fable.\textsuperscript{18}

She then points out that these prophecies were known to Joseph Smith as he had them in the Bible and, therefore, "they are useless as evidence for the Book of Mormon's historicity" (p. 90). Is someone claiming that they are evidence for the Book of Mormon's historicity? By this same logic, do the details of Mary's beauty then act as evidence for the Book of Mormon's historicity since they are in the Book of Mormon but not in the New Testament? She is saying that if the Book of Mormon contains a similar prophecy to the New Testament then the Book of Mormon is false because anyone could have plagiarized it. But on the other hand, if the Book of Mormon has a prophecy or detail not found in the New Testament, such as the prophecy about Mary (1 Nephi 11:13), then this is evidence that the Book of Mormon is false because such a thing is not mentioned in the New Testament. In other words, Charles's reasoning is one eternal round! The prophecies are, in fact, confirmations of the truthfulness of the Bible and they fulfill the intent of the Book of Mormon as a second witness for Jesus Christ. The title page of the Book of Mormon says that one of its purposes is for the "convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST" (Title Page). Also, Mormon said, "For behold, this [the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that you may believe that [the Bible]" (Mormon 7:9). The before-the-fact prophecies are shown to have abundant parallels. Moreover, the details of the prophecies were just as essential to the faith of the ancient inhabitants of America as they are to the millions of believers in the New Testament.

\textsuperscript{18} Robert Warrick says, "In a similar vein, too many details would have hurt the Jews because then little or no faith would have been required to accept him. A twenty-volume set all about Christ would not have hurt the Nephites at all because they did not have to accept the kid down the street as their Savior. When Christ came to them, it was not as a baby but as a resurrected being, miraculously descending from the heavens." Personal correspondence to Ross David Baron, 20 January 1995, 12.
II

The core to her second argument is that the New Testament expectations of the Messiah were drastically different from the expectations held by the people of the Book of Mormon. The implication is, of course, that the Book of Mormon was not an account of historical persons receiving revelation about Jesus Christ, but rather a work of fiction by Joseph Smith. The logic is that the Book of Mormon contains information about Jesus that is only found in the New Testament or in the writings of theologians after A.D. 33; writers in the Book of Mormon possessed knowledge about Jesus that antedates the New Testament and the theologians, therefore, the things known by pre-Christians in the Book of Mormon "are anachronisms that mar the book's credibility as an ancient document" (p. 94). The structure of her argument is valid; nevertheless, it is fallacious. It is a classic example of a circular argument. A circular argument "surreptitiously assumes the conclusion that it is trying to prove." The a priori assumption is that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document and her conclusion is that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document. For example, she cites Mark Thomas, who posits that the concept of an infinite atonement had "its origin" with a twelfth-century writer (p. 94). Therefore Amulek, in approximately 74 B.C., could not have discussed this principle (see Alma 34) "because logically Amulek should not have been exposed to [it]" (p. 94). She anticipates the fallacy of this argument by citing Stephen D. Ricks, who said that arguments similar to this "refuse [the Book of Mormon] any primary evidentiary value" (p. 95).

20 Citing Mark D. Thomas, "The Meaning of Revival Language in the Book of Mormon," Sunstone 8 (May–June 1983): 22. Tvedtnes, in his review, 16, completely disagrees even with the premise that the notion of "infinite atonement" originated with Anselm. He says, "the concept is biblical, at least in the New Testament. See Hebrews 7:22–28, especially verse 27, where Christ makes a single offering for the sins of the people (see also Hebrews 9:11–16, 23–28)."
Thus her argument that the Book of Mormon is fiction because it is different from expectations of New Testament writers is without foundation.

She then contrasts the comprehension that people in the Book of Mormon had about Christ with those of the New Testament. For example, she says, “Even those who were closest to him [in the New Testament] did not understand his identity” (pp. 90–91). *Understand*, however, is a loaded word. In one way she is absolutely correct, but the statement is too final; it ignores scriptures that depict understanding on the part of his associates. For example, Peter, one of those “who [was] closest to him,” said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16; see also John 6:66–69). Does that constitute “understanding”? Simeon, upon seeing the baby Jesus, said, “Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace. . . . For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. . . . A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29–30, 32). Did Simeon understand? John the Baptist, a cousin and surely someone “close” to Jesus, “looking upon Jesus as he walked, . . . saith, Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:36). Also, the wise men (Matthew 2:1–12), Anna (Luke 2:36–39), and Elisabeth (Luke 1:41–45) all testified of his identity. He was also continually worshipped throughout his ministry by people who knew his singularity.22 No doubt many did not understand who he was and the significance of his life, and the same can be said for the Book of Mormon; some truly understood his identity and others did not. That, however, does not render the Book of Mormon fiction.

Charles maintains that “Only after his resurrection did most of [his associates] begin to realize how extraordinary [Jesus] was and how the events of his life fit into the salvation of humankind” (p. 91). That statement simply ignores current scholarship on the issue.23 Margaret Barker, while researching her book *The Great

22 Worship of Christ: Matthew 2:2; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38. In every single instance the word used in the Greek for worship is *proskuneō*, denoting homage rendered to God.

Angel, said, "Like so many recent contributions to New Testament study, this one assumed that the idea of Jesus's divinity was brought relatively late to Christianity, invented by Greek converts who had not really left their paganism behind." She goes on to say that "versions of these ideas have been popular with New Testament scholars for most of the twentieth century, their hidden agenda being to emphasize the humanness of Jesus and to show that his 'divinity' was a later development and an unfortunate one at that." This parallels Charles's statement that his contemporaries viewed "Jesus as a mortal: a teacher of righteousness, ... a critic of the religious status quo, and a worker of miracles" (p. 90). This view makes no allusion to his divinity. She also says "During his lifetime his followers knew of no god other than the God of Israel, the god who sent Jesus into the world" (p. 91). This also is a declaration rejected by a number of current scholars; for instance, Barker states,

What has become clear to me time and time again is that even over so wide an area, the evidence points consistently in one direction and indicates that pre-Christian Judaism was not monotheistic in the sense that we use the word. The roots of Christian trinitarian theology lie in pre-Christian Palestinian beliefs about the angels. There were many in first-century Palestine who still retained a world-view derived from the more ancient religion of Israel in which there was a High God and several Sons of God, one of whom was Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. Yahweh, the Lord, could be manifested on earth in human form, as an angel or in the Davidic king. It was as a manifestation of Yahweh, the Son of God, that Jesus was acknowledged as Son of God, Messiah and Lord.26

25 Ibid. 1.
26 Ibid. 3, emphasis in original.
Based on this research you could say that Joseph Smith must have had prophetic insight (he was ahead of the scholars!) since the pronouncements of the prophets in the Book of Mormon about Jesus in a pre-Christian era declare his divinity as the Son of God, Messiah, and Lord.27

In this section of her essay Charles also says that “The New Testament has no record of Jesus describing himself as the Israelites’ god” (p. 91). Why does she not mention John 8:58? Therein Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). The footnote in the King James Bible published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints states, “The term I AM used here in the Greek is identical with the Septuagint usage in Ex. 3:14 which identifies Jehovah. (Cp. also John 4:26.)”28 That the Jews understood exactly what he meant is demonstrated by the fact that after this statement they “took . . . up stones to cast at him” (John 8:59); the capital crime here worthy of stoning was blasphemy. He, Jesus, said that he was Jehovah, the God of the Israelites! J. R. Dummelow interprets this verse by saying, “‘[Literally] before Abraham was born, I AM’ Christ seems here to declare Himself to be Jehovah, or I AM of the OT., the eternal self-existent Creator.”29

In this vein Charles also says that Paul “said that there was no other god but one (1 Cor. 8:4) and this god was the Father” (p. 91). She is making an assertion about this scripture that the scripture itself does not make. The correct verse to cite in this instance would have been 1 Corinthians 8:6, which states with clarity, “But to us there is but one God, the Father.” This was the understanding of the Prophet Joseph in April 1830, as he stated,


Lord: Over 1,000 times before the advent of the Savior.

28 The Holy Bible (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 1342 n. 58b.

“And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name” (D&C 20:29). This is exactly the meaning that Paul has; that there are many lords and gods is inconsequential to us, for “to us there is but one God, the Father.” The matter, however, is still not so clear; for example, Paul refers to the gospel as the “gospel of God” about his son Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:1–4). However, on at least eleven other occasions Paul says “the gospel of Christ” or the “gospel of Jesus Christ.” Mark opens his testimony referring to it as the “gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1). Therefore, according to Paul, the gospel of God is the same as the gospel of Jesus Christ because Paul knew that Jesus was also God. In addition, Paul quoted Psalm 45:6 and said that the Father says to the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Hebrews 1:8), the Father acknowledging the Godhood of the Son, Jesus Christ. John also leaves no ambiguity: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14). Thus, the New Testament in fact does testify that the Word, Jesus Christ, “was God.”

Finally, Charles avers that “the New Testament never refers to Jesus as Father” (p. 91). That brushes over the more complex issue of Jesus’ statements such as his declaration to the Jews, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30), or his claim that “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). It ignores his plea, as he was praying for his disciples, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (John 17:21). Furthermore, Matthew cites Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23, demonstrating that Jesus fulfilled this scripture. Isaiah says that the child born to the virgin would be “Immanuel,” or “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14). The last part of the word “Immanuel” is “el,” which is the

30 Gospel of God: Romans 1:1; 15:16; 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 8–9; 1 Peter 4:17.


31 Again, Dummelow, The One Volume Bible Commentary, 792, says, “The Greek indicates that the Father and the Son are two Persons but one God.”
Hebrew word for God; this ties to Isaiah 9:6 where this child is also described as the “Mighty God” (Hebrew Gibbor El) and this same God as the “everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). The child is Jesus; thus, Jesus is the Mighty God and the everlasting Father. Hence it is fatuous to say that the New Testament never refers to Jesus as Father.

The view that the New Testament expectations of Jesus were so different from those of the Book of Mormon, in light of new findings, is not apparent. Moreover, that he was Israel’s God, that he was known to his associates and followers as God, and that he openly declared his unique relationship of oneness with the Father can all be shown from the New Testament. The Book of Mormon attests to these verities as well.

III

I believe that the arguments presented in this portion of the essay constitute the main purpose Charles had in mind when writing the paper. For the most part it comes down to one issue: Charles contends that the Book of Mormon basically teaches Sabellianism with regard to the Godhead; that doctrine, she claims, was a manifestation of the beliefs of Joseph Smith at the time of the translation. She argues that, as his understanding changed, so changed the doctrine of the Godhead.

Sabellianism is often known as Modalism and Monarchianism. These philosophies about the Godhead originated about the third century and were branded as heresy by the “orthodox.” Modalists believed “in one identical Godhead Which could be designated indifferently Father or Son; the terms did not stand for real distinctions, but were mere names applicable at different times.”

The doctrine of course implies that “it was the Father Himself Who entered the Virgin’s womb, so becoming, as it were, His own Son, and Who suffered, died and rose again.” Sabellius “regarded the Godhead as a monad . . . which expressed itself in three operations.”

33 Ibid, 121. This is considered a more primitive form of Modalism.
34 Ibid., 122.
Thus for those who believed in Sabellianism, "the Godhead was but a single prosopon, i.e., individual or person." Her formal charge is that "like the Book of Mormon, Mormonism before 1835 was largely modalistic, making no explicit distinction between the identities of the Father and the Son. ... This means the christology of the Book of Mormon differs significantly from the christology of the Mormon church after the 1840s" (p. 103).

At the outset of a discussion on the christology of the Book of Mormon the following statement needs to be made: The Book of Mormon is not a doctrinal exposition on the Godhead; that is not its intended purpose. B. H. Roberts said it plainly, "The Book of Mormon is not a formal treatise on the subject of theology." Ezra Taft Benson said, "The Book of Mormon brings men to Christ through two basic means. First, it tells in a plain manner of Christ [not the nature of the Godhead] and His gospel. It testifies of His divinity and of the necessity for a Redeemer and the need of our putting trust in Him. ... Second, the Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ." Thus, the teachings of the Book of Mormon focus on Christ, not the details of his oneness with the Father. The nature of the Godhead is only touched on and in this sense the Bible is no different. Stephen E. Robinson states, "The scriptures themselves do not offer any explanation of how the threeeness and the oneness are related. The biblical writers were singularly uninterested in that problem or in questions dealing with God's essence, his substance, or the philosophical definition of his matter." Also, "There is no formal doctrine of the trinity in the New Testament." William J. Hill also said, "the New Testament itself is far from any doctrine of the trinity or of a triune God." Nevertheless, if one believed in trinitarianism, then one looking through that lens would find trinitarianism in the

35 Ibid., 123.
38 Robinson, Are Mormons Christian? 72.
Bible and the Book of Mormon. By the same token, if one believed in modalism, one could find justification by citing certain scriptures for a form of modalism in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, Mormonism teaches that "The scriptures do not always specify which member of the Godhead is being referred to in a given passage. Since the Father and the Son are one in all things, [some] scripture references . . . that speak of God are applied to the Father, though many may also apply to the Son. The perfections and attributes of one are also the perfections and attributes of the other."  

Charles herself footnotes Clyde Forsberg's master's thesis that "suggests that Book of Mormon christology is neither continuous nor consistent" (p. 98 n. 25). The same statement can be made for the Bible; the inspired writers were "singularly uninterested in the problem." The only scripture where there is a clear, specific definitional statement on the Godhead is in the Doctrine and Covenants. And this statement does not delve into the philosophical wrangling of the early Christian debates; however, it states plainly, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of spirit" (D&C 130:22). Why, then, the need to classify Mormon doctrine in terms of early Christian philosophy? For example, Blake Ostler states, "Mormonism is a modern-day Pelagianism of sorts."  

Charles states that Forsberg sees Arianism, Trinitarianism, Sabellianism, and inverted Sabellianism in the Book of Mormon. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland recently said, responding to similar views, "Is that really said with a straight face?"  

Charles makes the statement that "The Book of Mormon often makes no distinction between Christ and God the Father" (p. 98). True. The Old Testament also often makes no distinc-

---

43 Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Standard unto My People," delivered at a symposium 9 August 1994 at Brigham Young University prepared by the Church Education System and published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5.
tion, and the New Testament often makes no distinction. However, the scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, often do make the distinction.

Third Nephi and its depiction of Christ's visit to the people of the Book of Mormon is the perfect example of a separate and distinct being of Jesus Christ from the Father. Charles admits that the person Jesus is operating apart and separate from the Father and that the Father is simultaneously functioning as God. Notwithstanding this fact, she says, "However, they are not right to imply that this is evidence that Book of Mormon people had a concept of God and Jesus being separate and distinct individuals... These descriptions must be assessed in connection with the frequent statements (again particularly in 3 Nephi) that Jesus and his Father are one" (pp. 99-100). The logic here is that the statements that the Father and the Son are one in 3 Nephi denote that the people participating in the events did not conceive of the Father and the Son as separate and distinct. This in the face of the absolute fact that (1) the people witness the Son physically before them; (2) they watch him kneel and pray to the Father; (3) they hear him testify that he did "the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11); (4) he commands the believers to pray to the Father; (5) they hear him explain that in certain things he was constrained by the Father (see for example, 3 Nephi 15:14-16); (6) he commands them to commemorate their belief by partaking of the sacrament and this as a "testimony unto the Father" (3 Nephi 18:7); (7) he explains that he had to "go unto the Father" (3 Nephi 18:35); and (8) he tells them that he had to do specific actions with them because "the Father commanded that I should give unto you" (3 Nephi 26:2). By this same logic the statements in the New Testament about the oneness of the Father and the Son also show that the people of the New Testament were really modalists! (See, for example, John 10:30; 17:11.) She then makes a statement that is difficult to comprehend in light of the evidence of 3 Nephi; she says, "To say that 'oneness' in these passages refers only to oneness of will, purpose,

44 See Exodus 3:14; Psalm 110:1; and Isaiah 43:11-12 for just a sampling.
45 See note 31 of my review where Paul makes no distinction between the "gospel of God" and the "gospel of Christ."
power, and glory but not oneness of personality, person, essence, or number is imposing an interpretation on the text rather than letting the text speak” (p. 100). That statement needs some investigation.

There are only six times in 3 Nephi where Jesus talks about oneness. The “oneness” spoken of is not a oneness of “person, essence, or number” as stated by Charles. This is shown by a reference to oneness in the prayer of the resurrected Jesus in 3 Nephi 19:23, when he said, “And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.” Does Charles suppose that we are to be one in “person, essence, and number” with the Father? Isn’t that, according to her exegesis, letting the text speak for itself? However, even Protestants interpret the parallel verse of John 17:21 by saying “Christians are ‘one,’ because they are spiritually united to the Father and the Son” through faith. The important point is that this is how the people of the Book of Mormon understood it also. As a demonstration of this belief, Moroni, after this occurrence, exhorts us to “seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever” (Ether 12:41). Moroni clearly separates the Father and the Son even though he well knew of the “oneness” statements in 3 Nephi.

Charles’s explanation of the divine investiture of authority as explicated in the “Doctrinal Exposition” of 1916 is that it was a “modern explanation for the phenomenon in the Book of Mormon . . . of the Supreme God being identified as either Jesus Christ or God the Father” (p. 106). The doctrine of divine investiture of authority is really just another way of declaring the ancient law of agency. A. E. Harvey explains, “For the purpose of the transaction for which the agent was authorized, it was as if the principal agent himself were present. . . . Indeed the same principle finds expression in the notion of the envoy ‘representing’ the sovereign. If you knelt before him, you were kneeling, not to him,

47 Dummelow, The One Volume Bible Commentary, 804, emphasis added.
but to the absent king.” Thus, Jesus says, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38; see also 7:16; 8:26, 28–29, 38). The “Doctrinal Exposition” came about as a response to questions about the Godhead. The Lord responded to the requests of his followers and, in the form of an official explanation by the First Presidency, gave added insight into truths already revealed. The explanation is perhaps modern, but the doctrine is eternal. As God, Jesus can and does speak as if he were the Father; when the Holy Ghost reveals truth to a prophet he too can speak the words of the Father or the Son. Peter said, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Therefore, as one of many examples, Isaiah says “Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty One of Israel” (Isaiah 1:24). Here Isaiah, a holy man of God, is moved upon by the Holy Ghost to speak as if he were the Lord. Isaiah acted as an agent and had a divine investiture, as it were, to speak for God. Moses received a similar investiture as is recorded in Exodus when the Lord delineated the relationship between Moses and Aaron, “and thou shalt be to him instead of God” (Exodus 4:16). Thus, it is not at all strange that the Lord Jesus would also have divine investiture to speak and act in the name of his Father. Larry W. Hurtado terms divine investiture “divine agency.” He asks, “Was there anything in the religious heritage of the first Jewish Christians that furnished them with the resources for accommodating the exalted position of the risen Jesus, in heaven and in their devotion?” His answer is that the understanding by the Jewish Christians of the concept of “divine agency” enabled them to walk the fine line of venerating Jesus and at the same time worshipping one God. Peter Hayman states it in another way when he says that “most varieties of Judaism are marked by a dualistic pattern in which two divine entities are presupposed; the supreme creator God, the other his vizier or prime minister, or some other spiritual agency, who really ‘runs the

show.”” Hence, the First Presidency’s use of the words “divine investiture” to explain the actions of the Son when speaking for the Father is the same as saying “ancient law of agency,” “divine agency,” or “spiritual agency.”

Ether 3:14 is a verse cited to show, according to Charles, that Christ is not distinguishable from the Father in the Book of Mormon. However, the full verse is not analyzed. On page 101 she only quotes a portion. It is perhaps among the clearest explanations by the Lord himself of one of the ways in which he is the Father. “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people.” This sentence alone presupposes a subordination to another. “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son.” This is where Charles stops; however, what does Jesus say to explain that declaration? “In me shall all mankind have life.” A father gives life! Jesus is the life of the world (see John 11:25 and 14:6). The definition of father is “a man who has begotten a child.” The verse continues, “In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters” (emphasis added). Jesus is not his own Father as Charles would lead us to understand from this verse, but the Father of the faithful; we are “born again” (John 3:7) and become his “sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

Another more subtle accusation is the consistent use of the argument that if a doctrinal truth develops, or more specifically, if a doctrinal truth develops in the mind of Joseph Smith, then it must be a fabrication. This is the idea that the prophet cannot learn new truths, receive insight on revealed truth, or put more emphasis on one truth in one period to the exclusion of another in another period. In a bout of faulty logic she says, “Mormons teach that righteous people at all times are inspired by God with correct religious knowledge: therefore Abinadi’s religious knowledge must match our own regardless of what his words say” (p. 82). This is a fallacious argument called “equivocation.” “In

50 Hayman, “Monotheism,” 2, emphasis added.
52 Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “father.”
general, an equivocation is an argument that is strong only if some word or phrase is used consistently throughout the argument, but where the constituent statements of the argument are true only if that word or phrase is used inconsistently.\(^{53}\) "Correct religious knowledge" and "religious knowledge" that must "match our own" are equivocations; they do not mean the same thing in the premise as they do in the conclusion. Thus, Abinadi could have had a different understanding than Joseph Smith, or any other prophet for that matter, on a particular doctrine and the doctrine would still be true. Different does not mean false or mistaken.

She says that "Documents from early Mormonism reflect that Smith went from belief in one god to belief in two and later three gods forming one godhead" (p. 104). The "documents," however, are not cited, although she does reference three articles. These include one by James B. Allen,\(^{54}\) where he says absolutely nothing like the above quote; one by Thomas G. Alexander, where he in fact argues the opposite of her entire premise when he says, "the doctrine of God preached and believed before 1835 was essentially trinitarian, with God the Father seen as an absolute personage of spirit, Jesus Christ as a personage of tabernacle, and the Holy Ghost as an impersonal spiritual member of the Godhead,"\(^{55}\) and one from Dan Vogel who also does not make this case.\(^{56}\) She further references the unpublished 1832 account of the First Vision wherein the Prophet states that he saw "the Lord" and uses this as added proof of Joseph Smith's understanding in this 1830–1835 period. Milton Backman has rightly stated that "The thrust of the 1832 history was not who appeared but the Lord's message to him."\(^{57}\) However, Charles fails to mention the 1835 account of the First Vision where two separate and distinct

\(^{53}\) Carter, A Contemporary Introduction to Logic, 148.


personages are clearly identified\textsuperscript{58} and goes to the 1838 account to prove her point. As early as 1831, however, John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon, related an occasion when the heavens opened to Joseph Smith and he saw “the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Father making intercession for his brethren.”\textsuperscript{59}

The best place to see the understanding of the Godhead in the 1830–1835 period of the Church is to analyze the official statements located in the Doctrine and Covenants. All of the sections in the pre-1835 period clearly distinguish at least two separate beings. The revelations are primarily from the Lord Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith. In these revelations Jesus speaks of the mansions or “the kingdom of my Father”; he is referred to as the “advocate with the Father,” he “pleads before the Father,” he accomplished “the will of the Father,” he sits “on the right hand of the Father,” and is “the only begotten of the Father.”\textsuperscript{60}

As early as June 1829, Joseph Smith referred to three distinct members of the Godhead. For example, “And it shall come to pass, that if you shall ask the Father in my name ... you shall receive the Holy Ghost” (D&C 14:8). All three members of the Godhead are mentioned. Also, section 76, a revelation given in February 1832, gives a striking insight. Speaking for himself and the other participant who saw the vision, Joseph said, “For we saw him [Jesus Christ], even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:23). In this same section, Joseph described the glories of the various postmortal kingdoms. When describing the terrestrial kingdom, he said that it had “the presence of the Son,

\textsuperscript{58} See Milton V. Backman, Jr., \textit{Joseph Smith’s First Vision}, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), appendix B, 158–59.


\textsuperscript{60} Kingdoms or mansions of “my Father”: D&C 15:6; 16:6; 18:15–16, 25, 44, 46; 59:2; 72:4; 81:6; 84:74; 101:65; 106:8.

Advocate with the Father: D&C 29:5; 32:3; 45:3.


Accomplished will of the Father: D&C 19:2; 24; 50:27.

Sits on the right hand of the Father: D&C 20:24; 76:20.

but not of the fullness of the Father” (D&C 76:77) and differentiated it from the celestial kingdom by the all-important fact that the celestial kingdom is “where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne” (D&C 76:92). It must be emphasized that all these revelations are pre-1835. These sections demonstrate the concept that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinct and separate. Does this show that Joseph Smith had complete understanding of the Godhead? I would answer that it does not. His knowledge of God came “line upon line,” which is the way the Lord typically dispenses knowledge to his prophets (see Matthew 13:10–11; Isaiah 28:9–10; Hebrews 5:12–14; 1 Corinthians 3:1–2). In fact, many of the sections in the Doctrine and Covenants came as a result of his study of the scriptures and his desire to fully understand them.61 That pattern of learning from the Lord is consistent with all the prophets.

IV

This portion of Charles’s article really comes down to the fact that she does not believe that Jesus and Jehovah are the same being and sees no biblical proof texts that convince her otherwise. She refers to this doctrine as if it were strictly “Mormon theology.” In fact, she states rather vehemently (the emphasis is hers), “The use of the divine names Jehovah and Elohim in the Old Testament never supports the twentieth-century Mormon doctrine that Elohim is the father of Jehovah, that Jehovah, not Elohim, is the God of the Old Testament, or that Jehovah is Jesus Christ” (p. 109). However, a number of non-Mormon scholars disagree. For example,

All the texts in the Hebrew Bible distinguish clearly between the divine sons of Elohim/Elyon and those human beings who are called sons of Yahweh. This must be significant. It must mean that the terms originated at a time when Yahweh was distinguished from whatever was meant by El/Elohim/Elyon. A large number of texts continued to distinguish between El Elyon

---

61 For example, D&C 7, 76–77, 86, 130. Section 138 came through President Joseph F. Smith much the same way.
and Yahweh, Father and Son, and to express this distinction in similar ways with the symbolism of the temple and the royal cult.  

Also, "Yahweh was one of the sons of El Elyon; and Jesus in the gospels was described as a Son of El Elyon, God Most High. . . . Jesus is not called the son of Yahweh nor the son of the Lord, but he is called Lord."  

Charles then says that 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 is not understood properly by Latter-day Saints and cannot be used to sustain the belief that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. She accuses Paul of adding the "rock" part to the story because the Old Testament does not describe "any rock which followed the Israelites around" (p. 109). That the term "rock" did not mean a literal rock following them around is blatantly obvious. "Who is a rock, save our God?" (2 Samuel 22:32; Psalm 18:31), and "Truly my soul waiteth upon God. . . . He only is my rock" (Psalm 62:1-2; see also Isaiah 28:16 in connection with 1 Corinthians 3:11). Rock was a metaphor for God. Prominent non-Mormons agree; Adam Clark said, "It does appear that the apostle does not speak about the rock itself, but of him whom it represented; namely, Christ: this was the Rock that followed them, and ministered to them." Also, "We see St. Paul's recognition of Christ's pre-existence; the divine power which sustained the Israelites was the power of Christ working on earth before his incarnation." Charles's emphatic assertions about Elohim, Jehovah, and Jesus Christ are without firm foundation in current scholarship and in exegesis of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible.

**Conclusion**

Charles has shown a propensity to look the other way when scriptures, scholars, history, and official pronouncements of the Church disagree with her notions about the Book of Mormon and

---

63 Ibid., 4-5.
the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As has been shown, neither the Church nor the Book of Mormon teaches Sabellianism. As she quotes in her paper, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.” Thus The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declares, and has always done so, that “the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son. . . . He suffered temptations but gave no heed to them. He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father” (D&C 20:21–24, given April 1830).

---

66 TPJS, 370.
## Appendix A

### Old Testament Prophecies of Jesus Christ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lineage/birth</td>
<td>Genesis 49:9–10; Psalm 2:7; 89:27; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6,7; 11:1, 10; 60:2–3; Jeremiah 23:5–6; 33:15; Hosea 11:1; Micah 5:2–3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Analysis of Mosiah 15:1–4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Richard D. Draper</th>
<th>Monte S. Nyman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>God = Redeemer</td>
<td>Jesus = God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shows Godhood in premortal life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;because it was from Elohim that he received his physical endowments of life.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Refers to Jesus' mortal ministry. ... On earth he would carry out the will of the Father and through divine investiture of authority would represent the Father.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Because he had God (Elohim) for his Father, the power to give eternal life became inherent within the mortal Lord. Because the kind of life he gives is eternal, he became the Eternal Father.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Because he was conceived by an immortal being. ... Jesus has immortality as a part of his own nature. ... Because he was born of a mortal woman, he was also part mortal; ... through his dual nature he was the Father and the Son.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>&quot;The terms Father and Son define the nature of the mortal Christ. ... [He] always placed his sonship, that is, his physical wants and needs, under the strict control of his fatherhood, that is, his spirit.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;The one God referred to is Jesus Christ. The plural 'they' refers to the dual roles in his ministry and to his dual nature as the Father and the Son.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert L. Millet</td>
<td>Bruce R. McConkie</td>
<td>Institute Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>God = Jehovah = Jesus Christ</strong></td>
<td><strong>God = Christ</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Like every other **Son and **daughter of God he will be known as the Son of God. . . . In short, Jesus will do what the Father would have him do.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Son because he is born into mortality . . . Father because he inherits from his Father all the might of omnipotence.&quot;</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Because he will be conceived by the power of God and will thus have within him the powers of the spirit, he will be known as the Father. . . . He will be called the Father because he inherited all of the divine endowments, particularly immortality, from his exalted sire. . . . He will be called the Son because of his mortal inheritance from his mother.&quot;</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>&quot;Jesus inherited from his divine Father the Father's power and characteristics. In this sense . . . he (Christ) was a full manifestation of the Father in the flesh. . . . It is only fitting and proper . . . to speak of him as 'one God' for Christ even as the Father and Son, is only one being.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Therefore Christ will be both flesh and spirit, both man and God, both Son and Father. And they . . . are to be blended wonderfully in one being, Jesus Christ, 'The very Eternal Father of heaven and earth.' &quot;</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Reviewed by William J. Hamblin

Eugene R. Fingerhut’s *Explorers of Pre-Columbian America* is a historiographical introduction to the academic controversies surrounding the question of possible pre-Columbian explorations of the New World. It is not an attempt to resolve the debates, but simply to summarize the assumptions, methods, arguments, and evidence of the various sides in the issue. The topics examined include: the nature and limitations of the evidence, Ogam epigraphy, possible medieval European and Norse contacts, trans-Pacific contacts from Asia, and trans-Atlantic contacts from Africa. Fingerhut does not deal directly with the Book of Mormon, since he consciously excluded “theologically related discussions, such as descendants of the supposed lost tribes of Israel” (p. xviii) from consideration. Nonetheless, the book sheds a great deal of indirect light on the controversy surrounding the Book of Mormon by examining similar controversies on other alleged pre-Columbian contacts. His work relies heavily on “the single most important research tool on the subject of pre-Columbian transocean culture diffusion” (p. xvi), John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raish, Pre-
Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography.¹

Ronald H. Fritze’s Legend and Lore is a compendium of articles in encyclopedic form on the wide range of theories that have been put forward on possible pre-Columbian contacts between the New and Old worlds. The range of articles is quite extensive, from “Abubakari II” (a king of Mali who allegedly visited the New World in the early fourteenth century) to the nearly unpronounceable “Zichmini,” a supposed fourteenth-century North Atlantic visitor. Most articles include brief histories of the origin of the legends or theories, a summary of the main proposition, and bibliographic references. Fritze also appears to have used Sorenson and Raish’s “excellent” (p. xi) bibliography extensively.

Fritze has attempted to include all known theories and legends. Thus the archaeologically confirmed Norse voyages receive treatment alongside theosophic speculations about the lost continents of Mu and Atlantis. His book is not an attempt to determine which contacts did or did not occur (although he voices frequent skepticism), but is an encyclopedia of the intellectual history of theories about pre-Columbian contacts that have been proposed throughout the past four centuries. Fritze’s book is an invaluable resource in tracking down obscure people, legends, and theories about pre-Columbian contacts.

How does the Book of Mormon fare in all of this? Eight separate entries deal directly with the Book of Mormon: “Book of Mormon” (pp. 34–37); “Hagoth” (p. 111); “Jaredites” (pp. 137–39); “Jesus” (pp. 169–71); “Lamanites” (pp. 151–52); “Mulekites” (pp. 180–81); “Nephites” (pp. 183–85), and “Joseph Smith” (pp. 232–34). In addition, a useful index indicates that topics related to the Book of Mormon are discussed in a number of other articles (pp. 113, 115, 135, 164, 169, 177, 209, 223, 236, 246, 263, 270). In total, about 33 out of 278 pages are devoted in some way to the Book of Mormon—nearly twelve percent of the book. It is quite clear that Fritze does not accept the

historicity of the Book of Mormon; his articles reflect standard secular caveats, explanations, and assumptions. Although his understanding of the Book of Mormon is not profound, Fritze is to be commended for taking the Book of Mormon seriously enough to attempt to inform himself accurately on current Latter-day Saint thinking on the topic (e.g., some of his articles cite the work of Nibley and Sorenson). Fritze concludes his article on the Latter-day Saint idea of the visit of Christ to the Americas as follows: “If Jesus Christ did come to the Americas [as described in the Book of Mormon], he would definitely rank as the region’s most significant pre-Columbian visitor—or post-Columbian visitor, for that matter” (p. 140). Indeed.

In conclusion, although these books do not directly provide any new insights into the Book of Mormon, both can be recommended as useful reference works and summaries of the range of theories and current academic disputes concerning the possibility and nature of pre-Columbian contacts.

Reviewed by Garold N. Davis

That the Isaiah controversy in the Book of Mormon is alive (and as controversial as ever) is evident from the recent edition of *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* in which both Matthew Roper and John A. Tvedtnes discuss this controversy at some length in their reviews of the latest by Jerald and Sandra Tanner.¹ *The Legacy of the Brass Plates of Laban* will not solve this burning controversy. Sections of the book may, in fact, add much fuel to the fire. There is one thing this book will do, however. It will certainly make the task of combatants (and noncombatants) interested in the Book of Mormon Isaiah much simpler.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One is entitled “Evaluation and Significance of the Isaiah Variations” and contains an introduction explaining the position the author holds in regard to the Book of Mormon and the methodology to be used in the book. There follow five short chapters that will be helpful to the lay reader as well as the scholar. The first chapter discusses various aspects of the brass plates of Laban. Chapter 2 is a brief discussion of the challenges of translating and includes a short discussion on the distinction between translation and transliteration. The third chapter discusses the various biblical texts used in

making the comparison between the Book of Mormon and biblical Isaias. Chapter 4 identifies and describes a set of chiastic structures found in the Isaiah passages, and chapter 5 is actually a summary of the conclusions reached in the comparative study.

The main body of the book is found in Part Two, which is the “Verse by Verse Analysis.” The important contribution of H. Clay Gorton in this section of the book is that he makes available, in a very readable form, an analysis of nearly every verse from Isaiah found in the Book of Mormon alongside four other texts of the same verse. Gorton compares the Isaiah passages found in the Book of Mormon with English translations from the King James, the Douay-Rheims, the Septuagint, and the Salamanca Bibles and with the Spanish original from which the English Salamanca was translated. (The nature of these Bibles is outlined in chapter 3, as mentioned above.) The use of italics identifies additions, deletions, or changes in each of the passages for easy comparison. When the Book of Mormon text is identical with the King James text, Gorton has included only the Book of Mormon text with the caption, “No Change.” Captions above other verses read, “Minor Stylistic Change Only” or “Stylistic Change Only” and the changes are italicized. When significant differences appear between the Book of Mormon text and the King James (and other texts), Gorton introduces the verse with a caption identifying the nature of the change, indicates whether there has been an addition or a deletion, and then adds a commentary on the changes. Here is an example from 2 Nephi 12/Isaiah 2:

Verse 5—The Accusation of Wickedness against
Israel Is Eliminated in the KJ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book of Mormon</th>
<th>King James Bible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord; yea come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways.</td>
<td>O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case the Douay-Rheims, the Septuagint, the Salamanca Spanish, and the Salamanca English follow very closely the King
James Version. Any slight variations are italicized. Then follows a short commentary on the significance of the elimination of the phrase *for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways.*

Another example is 1 Nephi 20/Isaiah 48:

Verse 2—An Accusation Is Changed to a Commendation in the KJ Version

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book of Mormon</th>
<th>King James Bible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Nevertheless, they call themselves</em></td>
<td><em>For they call</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>of the holy city,</em> <em>but they</em></td>
<td><em>themselves of</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>do not</em> <em>stay themselves upon the</em></td>
<td><em>themselves</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>God of Israel,</em> <em>who is the Lord</em></td>
<td><em>upon the God of</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>of Hosts; yea,</em> <em>the Lord of Hosts</em></td>
<td><em>Israel; The LORD</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>is his name.</em></td>
<td><em>of hosts [is] his</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then follow the other texts with the variations italicized and a commentary on the significance of changing *but they do not* to *and*.

One thing becomes quickly obvious when we have the Isaiah texts from the Book of Mormon and the same texts from five different sources laid out before us, verse after verse, with the changes italicized, and that is that Joseph Smith did not slavishly copy from the King James Bible. The instances of “Additions” and “Deletions” in the King James Bible are numerous. Gorton tells us:

- A total of 348 textual changes are found in the 165 altered verses [of a total of 372 verses].
- The differences between the Book of Mormon and King James Isaiah texts are in the form of either *additions, deletions* or *modifications* to the original text of the Book of Mormon translation of the original records. Of these, 28% (104 verses) are additions, 30% (112 verses) are deletions and 42% (156 verses) are modifications. (p. 32)

By now some readers (I would imagine) are asking the questions: “Why, when the Book of Mormon text varies from the King James text, is it the King James text that has deleted from or added
to the original Isaiah text? Why is it not the Book of Mormon that has done the adding and deleting?” And this is where The Legacy of the Brass Plates of Laban will likely fuel the fires of controversy.

It is made very clear from the outset that the author is a firm believer in Joseph Smith’s account of how he obtained the Book of Mormon, with all that this implies. Consequently, one major thesis is that the Book of Mormon Isaiah taken from the brass plates of Laban predates 600 B.C. and is, therefore, the oldest of the Isaiah texts (and, presumably, the least corrupted). Gorton writes:

In the chapters that follow, the Book of Mormon Isaiah will be compared in complete detail with the King James Bible which was used as the basic text for Joseph Smith’s translation of the Isaiah chapters. Since the BM version is a translation of a copy of the Brass Plates of Laban, it is the most ancient scriptural text available today. Further, it was translated into English by the gift and power of God. (See Introduction to the Book of Mormon.) Therefore, it is concluded that any differences between it and other versions are the result of changes made to the original text from which the BM Isaiah was translated. (p. 41)

How, then (if the Book of Mormon Isaiah is taken from the oldest and least corrupted text), did the many additions and deletions get into the King James Isaiah? Once again Gorton is unequivocal:

The examination in this work of the substantive differences between the Bible- and Book-of-Mormon versions of the Isaiah chapters leaves no doubt that the changes were anything but accidental. . . . It is difficult to attribute to scribal errors either adding or deleting text to or from the original writing, especially when such additions and deletions are predominantly in a direction which tends to justify [ancient] Israel in its apostate condition.

As the uniform bending of trees in a windswept region gives evidence of the direction of the prevailing
wind, so does the uniform direction of the altered Isaiah verses give evidence of the specific bias of those who wrote and rewrote the Bible versions of Isaiah. (p. 66–67)

It was those uninspired men, principally in the pre-Christian days of apostate Israel, who, as they copied the scriptures, interpreted them in the light of their own circumstances and their frequently apostate beliefs. (p. 32–33)

And,

It becomes obvious from a study of the variant texts of Isaiah, as compared to the BM original, that those who wrote the versions available today made their changes “with malice aforethought.” The bulk of the significant differences between the KJ and the BM texts are passages in which the BM text is more critical of the sins of apostate Israel. The comparison shows that in the KJ version, criticism and condemnation of corrupt leaders and evil practices are repeatedly shifted or softened so the impact on guilty Israel is noticeably lessened. (p. 44)

Well, Gorton has produced the Book of Mormon Isaiah, verse by verse alongside four other Isaiah texts, and the reader can now, quite conveniently, decide for him- or herself. Of course, if the critic is of the opinion that it was Joseph Smith, and not ancient scribes, who entered the 348 textual changes “with malice aforethought,” then that critic should also be prepared to explain the intricate and complex procedure these changes suggest, as well as the implications of these changes.

What does Gorton do with Deutero-Isaiah (and, consequently, with Trito-Isaiah)? Consistent with his belief in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he dismisses this problem from his a priori assumption.

The reasons for doubting that the prophet Isaiah was the sole author of the book that bears his name are various, but principal among them is the misguided
notion that a prophet cannot see beyond the horizon of his own times. In other words, the critics opine that valid prophetic predictions are never more than the logical conclusions that can be drawn from observed phenomena. (p. 49)

And, consequently,

Since the Book of Mormon establishes that at least six of the Deutero-Isaiah chapters are known to have existed prior to the period attributed to them, . . . the premise set forth by the higher critics is proven to be fallacious, and their arguments may be discounted en [sic] toto. (p. 51)

One interesting argument for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and the veracity of Joseph Smith comes from a rather unexpected direction in chapter 4, "Chiastic Comparisons." The author prints out for the reader’s benefit a group of chiastic structures found in the Book of Mormon Isaiah and concludes:

In the ten chiasma [sic] that are common to the Isaiah Chapters in the BM and KJ, there are found no embellishments or enhancements in the Bible version. However, textual deletions from the KJ version have seriously degraded the chiastic structure of four of the chiasmas [sic] and entirely eliminated a fifth chiasmus. (p. 65)

Gorton concludes from this observation:

If Joseph Smith had been an imposter and had copied the Isaiah chapters from the Bible, it is inconceivable that he could have made additions to the text that would have filled in the missing elements in five of the ten chiasma [sic] that are common to the two texts. (p. 65)

The book contains a short appendix with statistical charts showing the number and type of changes made in the King James Isaiah. There is also a short bibliography.
Having these Book of Mormon Isaiah passages laid out in a clearly readable form for comparison with the King James Isaiah (and four other texts) is, in my opinion, worth the price of the book in itself. I have found it a very convenient reference work. It will be a valuable tool for teachers and scholars of the Book of Mormon.

Reviewed by Mark J. Johnson

In *The Legacy of the Brass Plates of Laban*, H. Clay Gorton sets out to show that the Isaiah material in the Book of Mormon is a better translation by comparing it with earlier Isaiah sources. The introduction sets forth the purpose of the book: “each difference between the Book of Mormon Isaiah and the King James Version Isaiah will be identified and noted. In addition, these differences will be compared with the wording of the Isaiah chapters in three other versions of the Old Testament” (p. 11). Gorton accomplishes this by providing a verse-by-verse comparison with other, older Isaiah texts. He uses translations of the Latin Vulgate, the Greek Septuagint, and the Spanish Salamanca Bible, which is believed to be a later translation of the older Masoretic Hebrew version.

Before he begins the point-by-point comparisons, Gorton provides us with 82 pages of introductory material and historical background. He includes sections on the problems of translation, possible motives for removal of material from the Isaiah texts, and chiastic comparisons between the Book of Mormon Isaiah and the King James Isaiah. These sections are informative, with background for the thesis of the book, yet are also filled with speculation on Gorton’s part.

The course of this review will be accomplished in four sections. First, I will discuss the texts which are compared to the Book of Mormon text and whether they are appropriate for comparison. Second, I will address the comparisons made by Gorton and his
views on the comparisons’ significance, and conclude whether these comparisons enhance our understanding of the Book of Mormon. Third, I will detail some of the chiastic parallels as outlined by Gorton. Lastly, I will address the completeness of the book and how it could have been improved.

**Translated Correctly?**

In addition to reproducing the Spanish text of the Salamanca Bible (a distraction for those not fluent in Spanish), he provides an English translation of the Spanish text as well. What perhaps may be viewed as a bias on Gorton’s part is his couching of the English translation of the Salamanca Bible in the vernacular of the Book of Mormon. Here, obvious differences are emphasized while small differences in transmission from the Hebrew into the Spanish and then into the English might be overlooked. Although Gorton should be given credit for including what is believed to be a translation of the Masoretic Hebrew, perhaps a better source could be found.

Gorton further asserts that his translation of the Salamanca Bible into English was done after the same manner that Joseph Smith followed in his translation of the Isaiah chapters. Although Gorton has support for his views of the methods of the translation¹ (that Joseph acknowledged that the Book of Mormon Isaiah was close enough to the King James Isaiah, and so simply lifted the King James texts to the Book of Mormon),² all we are told is that the translation was done by “gift and power of God.” Was this the method used by Gorton?

Further, this theory that is adapted by Gorton seems to conflict with the premise of the rest of *Legacy*, that the Isaiah texts contained on the brass plates of Laban were not corrupted by uninspired translators, which is the flaw with the King James Isaiah

---

¹ Gorton cites B. H. Roberts and Sidney Sperry in his bibliography (p. 249).
² Gorton summarizes his argument on page 31 of *Legacy*. He writes: “Although no firsthand account exists of Joseph Smith’s employment of the King James text in translating the Isaiah chapters, it is obvious he used the King James Bible as the basis for his terminology in translating the Isaiah chapters.” He goes on to say that when differences existed, Joseph followed the King James wording.
texts. It does not make sense to say that the Book of Mormon borrowed most of its language from the King James Version, and then to praise the Book of Mormon for its antiquity and purity.

The Book of Mormon variants contain many minor differences compared to the text of the King James Version (i.e., many differences are merely an addition of an *and* or a switch from a *that* to a *when* in the verse), and one is forced to ask why Joseph made such small changes at all. Basically, the theory is that Joseph used the texts of the King James Version to ease the burden of translation *except* when the two texts actually differed. In other words, Joseph used the King James Version when it matched the brass plates version. But if a match occurs, why not continue to use the original brass plates version instead of having to switch from one source to another, even though the texts are the same? Either way, the Prophet would have ended up with the same message.

In addition, many of the smallest changes (especially in 1 and 2 Nephi) are very close together. In order to note and correct so many small differences, Joseph would have had to make a detailed line-by-line study of the two different versions. A comparison of both the brass plates and the King James Version would require intense scrutiny. Surely, such an intensive process would not relieve the Prophet from the difficulties of translation. In fact, translation should not be an easy process, but rather one that needs to be pondered and studied (D&C 8:2).

Concerning this, John Tvedtnes writes, "The explanation most often given . . . is that the prophet Joseph Smith, while translating the plates, decided to put the Biblical passages into the King James language because it was the Bible most commonly used by his contemporaries." While it is possible that Joseph adapted the King James Version vernacular, the numerous changes do not justify regarding whole sections of the King James Isaiah as the source of the Book of Mormon text. All we can be sure about the translation is that the language used is approved of by the Lord (D&C 17:6).

---

Pass the Sifter

While outlining many significant changes, Gorton also makes us wade through large quantities of material with inconsequential changes. He affirms on page 66 that 233 differences exist between the Isaiah material in the King James Version and the Book of Mormon that are stylistic and have little (if any) effect on the meaning of the verse. Yet, despite the relative unimportance of these minor details, he guides us through them anyway. The reader is forced to weed out the wheat from the tares and find the passages in which differences are significant in the midst of the surrounding filler. Thoroughness is not necessarily a good thing.

The verses that do not contain differences are identified by their verse number and "No Change," and then the verse is listed anyway. Verses that contain minor changes are labeled "Stylistic Change Only," and all the different translations are listed, often without commentary. Once the reader has overlooked all the gnats this book strains at, he or she can gain some valuable insight into the differences in the Book of Mormon Isaiah passages.

Gorton's analysis of 2 Nephi 12 and Isaiah 2 is thorough and thoughtful. For example, in 2 Nephi 12:5, he notes the elimination of the phrase "yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways" in all other variants beside the Book of Mormon. Instead of trying to explain the change by a technical, scribal oversight, he emphasizes the spiritual aspect, that it was a deliberate omission by a wicked priest or scribe. Most of the analysis by Gorton throughout the book deals with the losses from this attitude, that wicked men eliminated Israel's condemnation and created the appearance that "all is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well" (2 Nephi 28:21).

This approach toward the different variants is very refreshing and makes Gorton's book worthwhile. I feel this approach is also in harmony with the message of the Book of Mormon on the elimination of the words of God. Nephi, the foremost expert on Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, never mentions that the words of the Lamb would be lost due to a scribal gloss, but rather emphasizes the words which were eliminated at the hand of the "great and abominable church" (cf. 1 Nephi 13:34). Nephi, I feel, would have approved the results achieved by Gorton.
The most impressive examples of things that were deliberately removed are contained in a separate section called “The Influence of Apostate Israel.” This chapter is excellent and is the crowning feature of the book. Anyone who is serious about the study of the Isaiah variants should consider this section with great care.

Writing Blind?

A major point in Legacy is that the numerous chiastic structures in the scriptures were the result of inspiration and not planning on behalf of the scriptural writers. Indeed, this is quite a claim. The Book of Mormon does contain elements of chiasmus which appear to be crafted and manipulated by its authors. Nephi, the son of Lehi, often uses quotations in his writings and builds chiaumas around them. Most notable is Nephi’s quotation of Isaiah 29:6–24 in 2 Nephi 27:2–35. This chapter (which is not covered in Legacy) begins with a chiasm which spans both Nephi’s introduction (2 Nephi 26:33–27:1–2) and the first few verses of the quotation of Isaiah 29 (2 Nephi 27:3–5). Here we find Nephi building a larger chiasm out of a small one. It seems most likely that Nephi was fully aware of chiasmus as he produced his record.

It should be noted that many ancient writings that are not of a scriptural nature are also chiastic. If chiastic structured messages were used exclusively by the Lord, then chiasmus should not appear in other sources. Yet chiasmus has been found in such broad sources as the writings of Homer, Sumero-Akkadian contracts, and the Mayan Popul Vuh. The presence of chiasmus in ancient writings does not guarantee it to be inspired scripture.

Probably the best example of the paradox that Gorton tries to establish is the Song of Solomon. This short book contains almost thirty chiaums, many of which are too large in element and span to be accidental. Yet the manuscripts of the Joseph Smith Transla-

---

6 Welch, Chiasmus in Antiquity, 336.
tion declare the Song of Solomon to be "not inspired." If chiasmus is a sign of inspired writing, the Prophet erred in denouncing the Song of Solomon. A more likely reason that the Song of Solomon contains chiasmus is that chiasmus was taught as a literary device throughout Jewish history.

How the Grinch Stole Chiasmus

A better use of the study of chiasmus in ancient texts should be to demonstrate completeness rather than inspiration. The book of Revelation, for example, is structured in chiastic form to help insure that the text is not added to, or taken away from (Revelation 22:18–19). Texts structured in chiastic form will betray any tampering from an outside source. Once chiasmus is understood, scriptural texts can be analyzed along chiastic lines. If the chiasm is incomplete or largely unbalanced, then it would indicate that "plain and precious parts" were removed from the author’s original message by the "great and abominable church."

An example of using chiasmus to indicate completeness may be found in an analysis of Revelation 12:1–4. While the rest of the chapter has been found to be chiastic by Nils Lund, these first four verses betray no chiastic characteristics. The Joseph Smith Translation, however, rearranges these verses into a tight chiasm. I have arranged verses 1–4 of JST Revelation 12 with Joseph’s changes in italics.

A And there appeared
   a great sign
   in heaven,
   in the likeness
   of the things
   on the earth;

---


8 The Grinch is just a shortened form of the great and abominable church. It is hard enough to write it over and over in my notes, let alone spell it.

B a woman clothed
    with the sun,
    and the moon
under her feet,
and upon her head
    a crown of twelve stars.

C And the woman being with child,
cried, travailing in birth,
and pained to be delivered.
And she brought forth a man child,

D who was to rule
    all nations with a rod of iron;
    and her child was caught up unto God
    and his throne.

C' And there appeared
    another sign in heaven;
    and behold,
    a great red dragon,

B' having seven heads
    and ten horns,
    and seven crowns
upon his heads.

A' And his tail drew
    the third part
    of the stars of heaven,
    and did cast
    them
    to the earth. (JST Revelation 12:1–4)

Or in other words,

A Heaven and Earth
B Heads and Crowns
C  Birth of the Child
D  Role of the Child
C' Appearance of the Dragon
B' Heads and Crowns
A' Heaven and Earth

The restoration of chiasmus points to a restoration of the original text. Because this chiasm is an exact fit within the rest of the chapter, it shows that this is how John the Revelator scribed the revelation and that it was manipulated by a later detractor.

Gorton does acknowledge that “degradation [of chiasmus] would occur as concepts were changed from the original” (p. 53). He declares, without evidence, that inspired chiasmus would degrade in various translations over the years, while a conscious use of chiasmus as a literary style would not. Such a claim is unfounded and too much to expect the reader to believe.

Gorton cites his book *Language of the Lord* as evidence to introduce his claim that chiasmus is exclusively an inspired form. He also claims that “it is the opinion of many scholars, . . . that the chiasmus is an inspired form.” He claims many sources, but none are cited. Research on the subject of chiasmus in the Doctrine and Covenants was completed some twenty years earlier by Charles Kroupa and Richard Shipp. Shipp and Kroupa also come to the conclusion that chiasmus is “a creation of the Divine Mind.” But while the revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith do contain numerous chiasms, as do other revelations of the early Church leaders, it does not prove that the ancient chiastic structures are exclusively the result of inspiration.

Although chiasmus in modern scripture might indicate inspiration from the Lord, its presence anciently only indicates literary prowess among the ancients.

---

12 Ibid., 22.
13 Kroup and Shipp, *From the Mind of God*, 8, 18–19, chart D&C 136:20–26 (a revelation given to Brigham Young) as chiastic. I find that chiasmus also exists in the writings of Joseph F. Smith (D&C 138:5–28).
14 It may be that the high level of chiasmus in the Doctrine and Covenants derives from the simple fact that it was the style of the Jews. Jesus used
“Make no claim of completeness”

H. Clay Gorton should be praised for his comparison of the Isaiah texts in the Book of Mormon to other ancient sources. Unfortunately, however, this book often disregards other Isaiah quotes in the Book of Mormon. One of the most profound changes in the Isaiah texts in the Book of Mormon occurs in its version of Isaiah 29. The Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 27), in quoting Isaiah 29, is not only different from the King James Version, but considerably different from the Joseph Smith Translation as well.


In many places in the Book of Mormon the same Isaiah text is quoted differently in different discourses. Isaiah 9:12–13 is quoted in 2 Nephi 19:12–13, and later paraphrased in 2 Nephi 28:32. A side-by-side comparison of these different verses, along with a comparison to the early Hebrew and Greek, would assuredly shed new light on the Isaiah texts in the Book of Mormon.

Further, his calculations of chiastic texts that are shared by the King James and the Book of Mormon Isaiah texts are a little short. While he records that ten are common to both texts, I have noted close to thirty.

**Conclusion**

While Legacy contains a lot of speculation by the author, it is valuable for its commentary on the spiritual nature of the losses of the Isaiah texts. If the reader desires a good grasp of the changes in the Isaiah texts, a side-by-side study of Gorton’s Legacy and Tvedtnes’s “Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon” should be most beneficial. Together, these two achieve a good balance of technical and spiritual.

---

Examining the Environmental Explanation of the Book of Mormon

Reviewed by Gary F. Novak

Joseph Smith's Response to Skepticism was first published in 1980 under the title Mormon Answer to Skepticism: Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon. The differences between the two editions are striking. The chapter titles differ; photographs

1 Robert N. Hullinger, Mormon Answer to Skepticism: Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon (St. Louis, MO: Clayton, 1980). Citations to the Signature edition will be parenthetical within the text.

2 The following table illustrates the sometimes noteworthy differences between 1980 and 1992:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Smith's Goals for the Book of Mormon</td>
<td>The Purpose of the Book of Mormon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Joseph Smith: Translator or Author?</td>
<td>Translator or Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II: The Occasion for a Defense</td>
<td>Part II. A Defense Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The Stage: New England and Western New York</td>
<td>The Palmyra Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III: The Sources of the Defense</td>
<td>Part III: Sources for the Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Lost: The Indians' Book of God</td>
<td>The Indian's Lost Book of God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and illustrations have been changed, omitted, or placed in a different order; and a foreword by notorious anti-Mormon Wesley P. Walters has been excised. In the 1980 edition, each chapter contains sections which are separated by titles set in boldface. The sections include revealing titles such as “Smith as Author,” “Smith’s Dry Spells,” “The Only Good Indians Are Dead,” “Ethan Smith: Restoration Discovered,” and “Joseph Smith: Restoration Transformed.” In addition, some chapters in the 1980 edition contain a “Summary” section.

In the 1992 edition, some endnotes have been changed or added. It may be tempting to claim that the changes to the endnotes are simply an effort to inform the reader of the relevant literature since 1980. But such a claim would seem misleading. Of the relevant literature published since 1980, Hullinger cites only that material which has been published by Signature Books. The list includes Dan Vogel’s Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon: Religious Solutions from Columbus to Joseph Smith, Vogel’s Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism, Scott H. Faulring’s An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, and D. Michael Quinn’s Early Mormonism and the Magic World View. Vogel’s and Quinn’s works clearly support Hullinger’s environmental explanation of the Book of Mormon. What is surprising is that Hullinger seems unaware of literature that bears directly on his work, published since 1980, including Richard Bushman’s important Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism and Dean Jepson’s Papers of Joseph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6: Identified: Ezekiel’s Two Books</th>
<th>Ezekiel’s Two Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Recovered: Isaiah’s Book, Buried and Sealed</td>
<td>Isaiah, Buried and Sealed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: Exposed: Masonic Ritual and Lore</td>
<td>Masonic Ritual and Lore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discriminating reader will notice the way in which anti-Mormon rhetoric has been toned down for the Signature edition.

3 This is only a small sample.

4 Although Hullinger’s reluctance to cite Richard Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 219, is perhaps understandable since Bushman directly contradicts his thesis, Bushman does cite Hullinger. Indeed Bushman’s Joseph Smith and
None of the relevant materials published by FARMS are acknowledged.

Hullinger offers what has come to be called a naturalistic, or environmental, explanation of the Book of Mormon. He does not, therefore, "believe that the Book of Mormon is a historical narrative of ancient Americans during the period from 600 B.C. to 400 A.D." (p. xv). It is, rather, "a product of the early nineteenth century and was written by Joseph Smith" (p. xv). Hullinger does not attempt to weigh the evidence for or against the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon, although much of the book is an argument against the possibility of its being authentic. He believes that by firmly placing the Book of Mormon in its nineteenth-century "context" he can establish that Joseph "had the ability, the motive, and the opportunity to write a brief in defense of God" (p. 14).

The 1980 "Foreword" by Wesley P. Walters is especially revealing. It begins:

Any attempt to describe Joseph Smith as a defender of God will strike many as strange, especially when they remember some of his activities. They may think it strange, indeed, that Smith could be motivated by the noble desire to defend revealed religion.

From both a biblical and psychological viewpoint, however, no one is perfectly motivated, and everyone is more or less inconsistent. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that Joseph Smith could engage in questionable activities and try to defend revealed religion during the same time period.\(^5\)

Although Walters finds some reasons not to "accept Mr. Hullinger's main argument," he still finds "this work of great value"\(^6\) because Hullinger "provides still further evidence that the Book of Mormon is a wholly [sic] modern production, not a

---

\(^5\) Hullinger, Mormon Answer to Skepticism, xi.

\(^6\) Ibid.
translation of some ancient, long-buried record."7 Walters does not indicate exactly what he thinks that evidence is, although he is confident that much of it is available for the first time. Hullinger is careful to indicate his "special gratitude" to Wesley P. Walters since "his standard of scholarship and detail set a goal toward which [Hullinger] strained in completing this study" (p. x). Those familiar with anti-Mormon literature generally, and with the work of Wesley P. Walters in particular, will find this statement especially revealing. For them, much of the book will be predictable, following a well-established route.

A Note on Method

According to Hullinger, he preferred "to put the best construction on Joseph Smith, let his expressed motives speak for themselves, then draw conclusions from the evidence" (p. ix). It is unclear how motives "speak for themselves" since all Hullinger has before him is a text or text analogue. At worst, the motives Hullinger attributes to Joseph Smith may reflect Hullinger’s own hopes, wishes, and assumptions. At best, he may accurately represent Joseph Smith’s own "motives." In any case, naïve versions of "letting the evidence speak for itself," or in Hullinger’s case "letting the motives speak for themselves"—a much more difficult task—have been largely discredited.8 Hullinger grants that his "approach may not always rule out a negative opinion of Joseph Smith, but it allows for a more charitable estimate of his intentions" (p. ix). If we cannot expect accuracy, we can at least expect charity.

Joseph’s intentions are not unimportant for Hullinger’s argument. Without making assumptions about Joseph’s intentions

---

7 Ibid., xii.
and especially his motivations, Hullinger would not have a hypothesis from which to work. This may be true of any historical interpretation, but the objective of getting at the motives or intentions of Joseph Smith is complicated at best, especially when considering the Book of Mormon.

This complexity can be illustrated by observing that Hullinger does not explain how we are to understand the different, differing, and conflicting speeches in the Book of Mormon: the teachings of Nephi, Benjamin, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni stand in stark opposition to Sherem, Zeezrom, and Korihor. Even the teachings of the Sherems, Zeezroms, and Korihors of the book exhibit subtle differences. The length of a speech, or the frequency of a certain kind of speech, cannot be understood to represent the authentic teaching of the author of a complicated and complex text.

If one assumes, as Hullinger does, that Joseph’s teaching and opinions are contained in the speeches of his reputable characters, Hullinger is still faced with the task of understanding those speeches in context. That context is contained within the Book of Mormon itself and not, as Hullinger assumes, in whatever similarities or parallels, real or imagined, that he thinks he has found in Joseph’s environment. If one grants that the Book of Mormon exhibits a complex plan—and it is increasingly difficult to claim that it is simply a hodgepodge of Joseph’s ramblings—one must also account for the arrangement of the various speeches, the changing setting in which they are presented, the character of the people to whom they are attributed, and the audience to whom they are addressed. Hullinger’s way of reading the Book of Mormon is remarkably simple, or simplistic, given the task he has set for himself.

**Reading the Book of Mormon**

Since the purpose of the Book of Mormon, according to Hullinger, is to “offer support for Christian claims for the Bible, for Jesus Christ, and for God” (p. 2) against the ravages of skepticism, and since “the book’s goals are elaborated through its plot and character development” (p. 1), an examination of how Hullinger interprets the Book of Mormon is in order. Since his intention is to explain the purpose of the Book of Mormon, I will
begin by examining a single page in the chapter, “The Purpose of the Book of Mormon.” On page 3 Hullinger cites the Book of Mormon no less than fourteen times.

The first scripture cited on page 3 is Doctrine and Covenants 3:20. Hullinger uses it to support his assertion that the Book of Mormon “would inform the Indians of God’s promises” (pp. 2–3). Does Doctrine and Covenants 3:20 actually say anything of God’s promises to the Indians? While it does mention the Lamanites, the scripture says nothing of Indians. But Hullinger is not wholly unaware of the problem of identifying Indians with Lamanites. According to the footnote the “term ‘Indian’ does not occur in the Book of Mormon, but it is synonymous with ‘Lamanite’” (p. 6). Hullinger’s apparent reasoning for identifying Indians with Lamanites is that “surviving Lamanites [after the final destruction of the Nephites] were cursed with a dark skin because of their unbelief and became the ancestors of native Americans” (p. 6). Hullinger’s assertions are complicated by the Book of Mormon itself, which indicates that at the time after the appearance of Jesus there “were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites” (4 Nephi 1:17). Of course the “skin of blackness” had come upon the Lamanites many hundreds of years before. When the “great division” came among the people, those “who rejected the gospel were called Lamanites, and Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites” (4 Nephi 1:38). The Book of Mormon makes the “great division” appear to be a matter of factionalism rather than one of merely hereditary or genetic links. There is no easy identification, within the Book of Mormon itself, of Lamanites with Indians. This may be a fine distinction, and not precisely central to Hullinger’s thesis, but it is nonetheless an assumption that permeates his work in a subtle way and actually makes a difference for how one understands the Book of Mormon.

According to Hullinger, the “Book of Mormon would lead [the Indians] to end their hatred of others, to befriend each other, and to stop their contentions” (p. 3). His support for this is Alma 26:9:

For if we had not come up out of the land of Zarahemla, these our dearly beloved brethren, who have so dearly beloved us, would still have been racked with
hatred against us, yea, and they would also have been strangers to God.

This scripture is part of Ammon’s reflections on his missionary efforts among the Lamanites. Of course, it makes exactly no promises concerning Indians or of ending “their hatred of others” and it does not support Hullinger’s assertion at all. But it does indicate that, typically, people do not hate those who have converted them to the gospel. Something entirely different, love, is the result. Undoubtedly this would be as true for Hullinger’s “Indians” as for anyone else.

Hullinger goes on to explain that if the Jews accept the Book of Mormon as “a witness that the man they killed was Christ and God,” “then God would restore them to their own land; for unbelief has kept them dispersed” (p. 3). One of the citations in support of this is 2 Nephi 15:15-18:

And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.

But the Lord of Hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.

The scripture in question is a direct, unmodified quotation from Isaiah 5:15-18. I am at a loss to understand how this supports Hullinger’s assertion.

This material represents only a fraction of the bad reasoning and sloppy reading that one can find in Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism. He goes on to claim that “American Indians were a segment broken off from [the] ten tribes.” Reading the Book of Mormon more carefully would have corrected this opinion since there appear to be, at a minimum, remnants of Joseph and Judah. Indeed the Book of Mormon begins in Jerusalem at least one hundred years after the ten tribes had been conquered and carried away.
Examining the Story

Hullinger is not satisfied to report the contents of the Book of Mormon, as he understands them. The point of the book is not to illustrate how Joseph fashioned his defense of God against Skepticism, but rather to provide a rationale for Joseph’s production of the Book of Mormon and thereby show that the truth claims of Mormonism—for clearly the Restored Gospel stands or falls with the truth claims of the Book of Mormon—are simply false. In order to construct his environmental explanation, and at the same time undercut the traditional story of the Book of Mormon and the foundation of the Church, Hullinger examines Joseph’s immediate environment, the Harris-Anthon affair, the use of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, Masonry, and Joseph’s ideas about revelation.

Those who provide environmental explanations of the Book of Mormon sometimes disagree among themselves concerning matters of detail and even, on occasion, the large picture. One can therefore confidently expect Hullinger’s explanation of the Book of Mormon, his explanation of its manner of production, and his understanding of Joseph’s “motives” to contrast with at least some of the more recent thought on the matter. Hullinger himself is apparently aware of at least some of these differences.9

Hullinger’s story of Joseph Smith can be contrasted with other recent environmental, or naturalistic, accounts. Hullinger’s account seems to indicate that Joseph knew he was responding to Skepticism and that Joseph’s response was both reasoned and calculated. Marvin Hill, for example, would agree with Hullinger that much of the Book of Mormon displays elements of its environment, especially Arminianism, with vestiges of Calvinism.10 How-

9 In commenting on George B. Arbaugh’s Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character and Changing Forms (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), Hullinger notes that his own “conclusions would call into question [Arbaugh’s] central thesis about the Book of Mormon” (p. ix). He also credits Fawn Brodie for demolishing the Spalding theory, Marvin S. Hill for correcting Brodie’s neglect of Joseph’s “religious motivations,” Jan Shipps for attempting to get past “saint or fraud” dichotomies, and Mario DePillis for recognizing Joseph’s quest for “religious authority” (p. xiv). Hullinger also occasionally notes his disagreements with these “historians.”

10 Marvin S. Hill, “The Shaping of the Mormon Mind in New England and
ever, Hill holds that Joseph, like other early Mormons, could think that his dreams “had cosmic significance” because he lacked “the benefits of Sigmund Freud’s analysis of dreams.” While this seemingly accounts for Joseph’s visions, Hill faults Fawn M. Brodie for thinking Joseph was a conscious deceiver because it is unlikely that Joseph “would have equated these terms [vision and dream] so frankly in his manuscript and in the Book of Mormon. That Joseph believed that his dreams or mental images were visions, that he also believed that what he felt intuitively was the voice of the Lord speaking within, was not inconsistent with his background and with the time and place in which he lived.” Joseph can be excused from the charge of being a conscious deceiver because he did not know that his “visions came during periods of great stress and offered surcease from troublesome doubts.” Hullinger’s naturalistic account conflicts with Hill’s to the degree that Hullinger holds that Joseph knew exactly what he was doing, however noble his intentions to save Christianity from the ravages of Deism.

Others have suggested that revelation, that is, Mormon “mystical experience,” can be explained by not merely the cultural forces causing stress and individual crisis, but also by identity crises and mysticism. According to Thomas G. Alexander, the

New York,” BYU Studies 9/3 (Spring 1969): 351–72. According to Hill, ibid., 364, he agrees with “Thomas F. O’Dea that the general tone of the Book of Mormon is Arminian but believe[s] he fails to note remnants of Calvinism that remain.” According to Hullinger, “The triumph of Arminianism in Smith’s thought made of sin an enabling force, freeing men and women to discover and make of themselves gods” (p. 174). Hullinger also sees “the early Unitarian view in treating the Trinity, that ‘Christ was the God, the Father of all things’” (p. 156).

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
very earliest Mormon mystical experiences, including “the opening of the heavens, the visitation of angels, and seeing Jesus Christ sitting on the right hand of the Father,” later became more “subdued”—that is, became inspiration—as forces in the surrounding culture changed and persecution abated. Wilford Woodruff “passed through two important changes in the basic meaning of religious experience.” Sometime during the Nauvoo period “the basic nature of mystical experience changed from open supernatural experiences to personal revelation, dreams, inspiration, and to insights connected with missionary work, church ritual, healings, and the dealings of God with man.” Thus Alexander suggests that the same “social, cultural, and economic conditions associated with modernization which spawned Woodruff’s search for Christian primitivism also fathered Marxism.” Both Marxism and the Restored Gospel can be seen as a response to the same cultural conditions. Others have suggested that Joseph’s revelations can be explained as a “will to prophesy” which involves “the reaction of a few brilliant conflicted persons to the unbridgeable contradictions of life.”

“mysticism” as an explanation of the early revelations of the Saints. Mysticism is, of course, foreign to the Saints’ self-understanding and, as commonly understood, distinct from revelation. Explaining what he means by mysticism, Alexander, ibid., distinguished between “affirmative mysticism” in which the “mystic, prophet, or revelator could learn of God’s will through spiritual experiences, then pass it on through the written word or by word of mouth to those of the faith who were prepared to accept it.” He thus contrasts “affirmative mysticism” with the more traditional negative mysticism in which “knowledge and mystical insight were personal and often ineffable” and which revealed nothing of God or his will. Thus, Alexander, ibid., could claim that “Joseph Smith insisted on the importance of mystical knowledge through direct inspiration in Mormon religious experience. Joseph Smith’s religious life can be interpreted as a series of mystical experiences and the Book of Mormon (Moroni 10:5) promises all persons a confirmation of the Spirit as a means of knowing ‘the truth of all things.’”

16 Ibid., 69.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 67.
19 Arrington and Bitton, The Mormon Experience, 17.
Joseph "can be viewed as finding his capacity for prophethood in a series of contradictions" and conflicts.20

Hullinger's Joseph Smith is more calculating and more reasoned, if not reasonable, than this sampling of opinion would hold. Indeed, Hullinger does not provide an explanation of revelation: revelation is simply a means to Joseph's ends. Joseph invented revelations when it suited his purposes in discrediting or responding to Skepticism. Those revelations were necessary to counter the charge that revelation had ceased with the apostles and hence that God was changeable. Hullinger's Joseph regains that ground against Skepticism and Deism and, at least in this regard, differs from some other environmental explanations. If Hullinger's Joseph is responding to cultural and environmental forces by producing the Book of Mormon and reporting other revelations, at least he is not the victim of or victimized by those forces.

Most of Hullinger's story follows familiar ground. The Book of Mormon contains a response to and condemnation of Masonry, while borrowing from it as "a truly ancient form confirming God's relationships with humans from Adam on" (p. 111); it confirms popular legends about the lost ten tribes and the origin of the Indians (p. 60); it adopts "the Unitarian point of view of Christ" (p. 123); it affirms a traditional view of prophecy against the deists (p. 144). Of course, Joseph borrowed from Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews. Hullinger notes that "dependence cannot be dismissed because of what Joseph Smith did not use from the View of the Hebrews, or because he altered the features of resemblance between the two books, or because he contradicted some features of the earlier work" (p. 185). This is to say that he will not allow anything to count against the Ethan Smith theory. "One need only show that the ideas of the Book of Mormon were in reach of Joseph Smith" (p. 185). And, according to Hullinger, it does not matter if Joseph actually used or read View of the Hebrews, since given "the wide availability of [other] sources, it is difficult denying their possible influence on Joseph Smith" (p. 186).21 This sampling represents, of course, a more or less

20 Ibid., 18.
21 How large was the library to which Joseph had access and how did he manage to spend so much time burning the midnight oil while his family was desperately poor? I occasionally joke to friends that I intend to write a book
conventional environmental explanation of the Book of Mormon. In this, Hullinger differs very little from those who have preceded him. If he can be seen poisoning the wells against any possible refutation of the Ethan Smith theory, he can be excused since this is simply the standard anti-Mormon response to the Book of Mormon.22

Hullinger complains that "the Book of Mormon is vague about details of ancient American geography and antiquities, enough so that no area can be specifically pinpointed on a map" (p. 185). He is apparently unaware of John L. Sorenson's *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* in which Sorenson details every major Book of Mormon site and in most instances provides a known Mesoamerican location.23 Sorenson and others have continued research on the so-called limited geography model of the Book of Mormon. But limitations in Hullinger's research base are not uncommon.

Why Review This Book?

*Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism* is not, despite Wesley Walters’s claims, breaking new ground or providing new material against the Book of Mormon. Why bother reviewing a book that can best be described as less than consuming reading?

According to David P. Wright, in another Signature publication, *Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism* is one of several studies "making it clear that these works [the Book of Mormon

---


and the book of Abraham] are not ancient." Wright indicates that he believes "these studies are on the right track" and his essay is intended to "add to the evidence for this view." But Wright's reading of the Book of Mormon is much more careful, if not more considered and coherent, than Hullinger's; Wright's argument is more sophisticated by several magnitudes. It is difficult to imagine that Hullinger's more traditional anti-Mormon argument against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon would provide support for the kind of textual analysis performed by Wright, except to the degree that Wright, like Hullinger, sees the Book of Mormon as some variety of frontier fiction.  


25 Ibid., 166.

26 A large percentage of the books and essays Wright cites in support of his position have been published or republished by Signature Books. And they all certainly fit the ideology currently being advanced by Signature. On the question of what may be described as the Signature agenda, see Louis C. Midgley, "More Revisionist Legerdemain and the Book of Mormon," Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 3 (1991): 305-11; Daniel C. Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 4 (1992): xlviil-liv.

However, many of the items are of questionable quality and at least one of the authors does not understand himself as attacking the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon. William D. Russell's "Historicity and the Mormon Scriptures," Journal of Mormon History 10 (1983): 53-63, represents little more than Russell's personal odyssey of unbelief and contains more than its share of faulty reasoning and insufficient statistical samples. Russell's best argument in "A Further Inquiry into the Historicity of the Book of Mormon," Sunstone 7 (September-October 1982): 20-27, attacks the Book of Mormon on the basis of its apparent inability to square with certain modern assumptions about the composition of the Bible. Russell's argument has been thoroughly examined, if not dismantled, by A. Don Sorensen, "Russell against the Book of Mormon: The Problem of the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi," in a paper delivered at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, Provo, Utah, 11 May 1984. Marvin Hill, Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), does not understand his own argument concerning the nineteenth-century environmental influences on the Book of Mormon as undermining its historical authenticity. According to Hill,

That the Book of Mormon addresses some theological and other issues discussed in America in 1830, as Grant Underwood, among others, has argued, seems evident. But Brodiean conclusions are not in
Issues of the influence of Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism aside, it is not difficult to imagine an argument against the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon that attempts to separate what is understood as the ethical or moral teaching of the book from the historical content. It would not matter, our imagined critic would say, whether or not there was a real Lehi colony, or whether there were real “empirical” gold plates, or whether Joseph Smith really talked to an angel named Moroni. The moral teaching of the book would remain just as true, even if Joseph Smith’s story were completely false or even an out-and-out lie. That teaching would surely include words from the Savior’s sermon at the temple, even though Christ never really said those words, and we would be able to salvage truths about unconditional love. (And we could, at the frontiers of theology, discuss the limitations of such love and perhaps even speculate that putting any qualifying word in front of the word love, like total, Christ-like, and perhaps even unconditional, no longer makes that love genuinely unconditional.) Of course, at this point we would no longer need worry about a restored Church of Jesus Christ, since, obviously, no restoration could have happened if Joseph did not have real plates and did not talk to heavenly messengers. And we could eliminate the need for any priesthood or temple ordinances since it hardly makes sense to talk about the gospel being restored while claiming that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic ancient record. We could salvage some kind of community based

order here. For one thing it could be argued that the text is prophetic and Blake Ostler has suggested that there might be elements of both ancient and 1830 American culture in it. But I would not exclude the possibility also that one finds what he knows in the text—that an Americanist will find Americanisms and Egyptologist Egyptian elements, and so on. As Hugh Nibley has argued, it is very difficult to claim finality in such matters. I meant what I said when I criticized Brodie for assuming she had final answers when other explanations might be possible.

on the moral teaching of the Book of Mormon, but we could very well find that the teaching is open to various conflicting interpretations because no prophecy or inspiration is available to guide our efforts to interpret that teaching. We could then discard whatever portions of that teaching that we found unsavory or which conflicted with our efforts to seek pleasures of one kind or another, or which offended our sense of the "politically correct." So it may turn out that the Book of Mormon could not provide the basis for that kind of community and may also prove to be its destruction; or at least the contention caused by various conflicting interpretations of the moral teaching would prove disastrous.

So it turns out that the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon is in an intricate way linked to the restored gospel and to the faith and memory of the Saints. The book is both the foundation and the mortar of that community. Books like *Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism* remind us of the relationship of the Book of Mormon to the community of the Saints and, in a negative way, make it more difficult to accept various and conflicting interpretations of how Joseph may have, knowingly or unknowingly, fabricated the Book of Mormon. Joseph’s own story of how he received and translated the Book of Mormon remains the most coherent and sensible explanation.

Finally, an environmental explanation of environmental explanations of the Book of Mormon: It is by now clear that environmental explanations of the Book of Mormon follow a more or less clearly marked path. Most agree that Joseph worked elements of his own environment into the Book of Mormon, including popular stories linking the lost ten tribes to the Indians, anti-Masonry sentiment, and Calvinism combined with Arminianism, with elements of Universalism thrown in. Many also agree that he had access to Ethan Smith and other popular writers of the day. Some go so far as to include psychological explanations, including Freudian interpretations of dreams, but also other elements of dysfunction or dissociation. All of these explanations of Joseph Smith are simply part of the historian’s culture, and are talked about at the Sunstone Symposium, at the Mormon History Association, at late night gatherings in hotel rooms during these conferences, over the table at lunch, in the hall between sessions and classes and, most recently, on the Internet. One cannot study
Joseph Smith for very long without encountering them. And since historians live in a stress-filled environment in which they must “publish or perish,” we can hardly expect them to resist the temptation to use what they find in their culture and publish environmental explanations of Joseph Smith. Those explanations are, so to speak, “in the air.” To resist that temptation would be to say that the historian is not a mere product of his times (but such a claim is clearly false since he obviously lives in our time). If some find themselves objecting to my environmental explanation of their environmental explanations, the answer to the question Why? may prove enlightening for our understanding of Joseph Smith’s story as well.

Reviewed by LeIsle Jacobson

Bill McKeever, author of *Answering Mormons’ Questions*, and Eric Johnson, author of the booklet *Quetzalcoatl: Jesus in the Americas*, set themselves two goals, which they believe the book *Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend* will fulfill. These goals are as follows: (1) Providing effective ways to challenge a Mormon’s arguments without being offensive (book cover and title page). (2) Using the formula of “reason, logical arguments, and the word of God” to prove that Latter-day Saint doctrine is in error (pp. 9–11).

It is the purpose of this review to examine briefly how successful the authors have been in meeting their goals.

Nonoffensive?

McKeever and Johnson promise to teach their readers how to challenge Mormon beliefs without being offensive. With that in mind, the introduction of their book brings up many worthwhile ideas and comments:

- “While it is important to raise questions as Paul did on Mars Hill in Athens (see Acts 17), we do not need to offend the hearer” (p. 10).
- “Avoid telling Mormons what they believe. Instead, ask them what their position is on a certain issue” (p. 10).
• "Make sure to define your terms. . . . Mormonism has adopted Christian terminology while substituting its private definitions" (p. 11).

Had the authors stopped with the introduction of the book, McKeever and Johnson might very well have managed to meet their goal of producing an example of nonoffensive anti-Mormon literature. But Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend is little more than a rehashing of material drawn from previous anti-Mormon books. Since most of the arguments and accusations presented in Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend have, in the past, proven to be at least mildly offensive to the majority of Latter-day Saint members, it is hard to understand why the authors believed these same arguments would fail to offend this time around. In addition, the authors ignore much of the good advice that they gave to their readers and thus produce the same negative confrontations that they tell their readers to avoid. A couple of examples follow:

**Good Advice: “Avoid telling Mormons what they believe. Instead, ask them what their position is on a certain issue.” (p. 10)**

What Mormons say:

Though the First Presidency endorsed the publication of the Journal [of Discourses], there was no endorsement as to the accuracy or reliability of the contents. There were occasions when the accuracy was questionable. (p. 39)\(^1\)

Of course it is true that many Latter-day Saints, from the Presidents of the Church and members of the Quorum of the Twelve down to individual members who may write books or articles, have expressed their own opinions on doctrinal matters. Nevertheless, until such opinions are presented to the Church in general conference and sustained by vote of the conference,

---

they are neither binding nor the official doctrine of the Church. (p. 35)²

What McKeever and Johnson tell the Mormons they really believe:

Since the accuracy of the *Journal* is an artificial excuse, it would seem to appear that the reason Mormons do not take the volumes seriously is because they expose the heretical teachings of past leaders. Mormons who have read and downplay the *Journal of Discourses* know these aberrational teachings undermine the authority and claims of the LDS Church. (p. 42)

What Mormons teach:

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. (D&C 9:7–8; only verse 8 of this section is quoted in McKeever and Johnson, p. 66)

What McKeever and Johnson say Mormons really believe:

When sharing their faith, many Mormons (especially the LDS missionaries) will challenge potential converts to first, read the *Book of Mormon* and second, pray about its message to see if it is true. Mormons are taught that a “burning in the bosom,” of good feelings, will occur if this test is taken. It is assumed that rational thought should be disregarded while this so-called spiritual test is applied. (p. 65)

---

Good Advice: “Make sure to define your terms. . . . Mormonism has adopted Christian terminology while substituting its private definitions.” (p. 11)

The authors go so far as to provide a glossary of terms at the end of their book to help facilitate communication between nonmembers and members, yet throughout the book the authors themselves fail to recognize the definitions which Mormons give to many words. This practice cannot help but produce communication problems between Mormons and nonmembers who attempt to use McKeever and Johnson’s arguments in a conversation.

For example:

Testimony: When Mormons say “burning in the bosom,” they are speaking of a confirmation given by the Holy Spirit, but the authors define “burning in the bosom” and “testimony” as “good feelings” or “strong feelings” or “happy feelings” (pp. 182, 65, 70), with no acknowledgment of the Latter-day Saint belief in the influence of the Spirit.

Prophet: When Mormons say a prophet they are speaking of a man who acts as the mouthpiece of God. When a prophet speaks for God, his words are the words of God and the prophet’s mortal status has no bearing on the validity of God’s words. The authors, on the other hand, make much of the fact that the Latter-day Saint prophets are men who are subject to infirmities of age and error of judgment—therefore, in the view of the authors, trusting the words of these men is the same as trusting in mortal man (p. 71–77). The authors fail to recognize that such arguments have no meaning to a member of a church that teaches that prophets can be imperfect and yet still be tools in the hands of God.

Scripture: The authors, on several occasions, address the question of which is best: scripture, or the words from living prophets? (p. 77) Since, by Latter-day Saint definition, scriptures are the written words of God as given through the prophets it is illogical to try to put one above the other.

Together: The authors ask, “If Mormon Families Will Be Together Forever, Where Will the In-Laws Live?” (p. 107)—the argument which follows this question is that it is impossible for a large extended family to all live together in the same place; therefore, the doctrine of the eternal family is illogical (p. 111). How-
ever, Mormons don’t define “together” as “all in the same place”—rather, the belief that families can be together throughout eternity is a belief that family ties will continue to exist after death, in much the same way that family ties continue to exist even when children grow up and leave home.

**Christian:** As the question heading for chapter one, the authors ask, “If I accept you as a Christian, will you accept me as a Mormon?” (p. 13). To a Latter-day Saint member this question makes about as much sense as an alley cat asking a pampered Persian, “If I call you a cat, will you call me a housecat?” According to Latter-day Saint definition, the Mormons, the Methodists, the Catholics, the Baptists, the Anglicans, etc., are all subgroups within the greater category of “Christian” religions.

In order for the question heading for chapter one to make sense one must presuppose that the Mormon being questioned will agree that his friend has some exclusive right to the title of “Christian.” Yet McKeever and Johnson admit that Mormons insist that they are followers of Christ, or Christians (pp. 13–14).

**Omnipotent:** The authors define omnipotence as meaning “to have more power than any other” and proceed to present an argument against the doctrine of deification that is based on this definition, i.e., there can’t be more than one God because the definition of omnipotent rules out the possibility of anyone but God being omnipotent (p. 121). But the authors’ definition is by no means the only, or even the most widely accepted, definition of omnipotent, and their logic fails when they are speaking to someone who does not accept their definition. *Omnipotent* may also be defined as having “unlimited power” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1977, p. 223), a definition which would allow more than one being to share the characteristic of “omnipotence.”

**Infinite vs. Finite:** The authors present several philosophical arguments to support the idea that finite beings are incapable of gaining infinite knowledge (p. 121); therefore, no finite being can be omniscient. This, the authors feel, makes it logically impossible for men to become like God. Yet the authors are aware that the Latter-day Saint Church teaches that intelligence is eternal (p. 165), thus a man’s time here on Earth may be finite, but the intelligence which he possesses is infinite. Therefore, the authors’
arguments regarding finite beings and infinite knowledge are invalid within the framework of Latter-day Saint beliefs.

If the authors truly intend to convince members of the Latter-day Saint Church by logic and reason that there are errors in the doctrines of their church, they cannot use arguments and definitions that are valid only within the framework of their own personal beliefs.

**Reason and Logic?**

Do McKeever and Johnson use arguments that would sound reasonable and logical to a faithful member of the Latter-day Saint Church? One characteristic that one would expect from a reasonable argument is consistency. Yet McKeever and Johnson offer us contradicting arguments and ideas. For example:

**Do we say we are different or do we say we are the same?**

The authors suggest that Mormons can’t be Christians because they themselves say that they are different from other Christian churches (pp. 20–22). This suggestion contradicts their earlier position that the Latter-day Saint Church is engaged in a campaign to convince nonmembers that they are just another Christian church (p. 14). The authors also state that it is possible for individuals to convert to the Latter-day Saint Church with the misunderstanding that it is “just another Christian denomination” (p. 10). And the authors accuse Mormons of misleading Christians with such statements as Mormonism is “‘just the same’ as biblical Christianity” (p. 22).

However, in conflict to their earlier position, the authors say that “Mormon leaders since Joseph Smith’s day have continually emphasized the differences, not the similarities, between Mormonism and Christianity” (p. 22). If Mormon leaders are continually emphasizing the differences between Latter-day Saint Church doctrine and Christian creeds it is not likely that the members of the Latter-day Saint Church would go about telling all their friends that the Mormon Church is just like every other Christian church. Nor is it likely that a convert to the Church
would fail to understand, at least in part, that Latter-day Saint doctrine differs on many points from Protestant or Catholic doctrines.

**Does the Holy Ghost play a part in bringing souls to Christ?**

The authors argue that "it is the place of the Holy Spirit to convict [?] hearts and bring souls unto Christ" (p. 10), yet the authors then devote an entire chapter to the idea that the truth about Christ and gospel doctrine can be found only by an objective study of the Bible (pp. 65–70). If it is the place of the Holy Spirit to convict hearts and bring souls to Christ, how does the Holy Spirit manifest his influence? The authors condemn the idea that the Spirit can be manifest through feelings of peace and joy, yet offer no alternative way by which the Spirit might manifest itself to man.

**Trusting Mortal Men?**

The authors condemn the members of the Latter-day Saint Church for putting their trust in the words of living prophets because the Latter-day Saint prophets are "mere mortal men" (pp. 71–77). Yet the authors are comfortable relying on the interpretation of scriptures made by other mortal men. For example:

> We do not know a single evangelical Christian commentator who suggests that this verse (James 1:5) advocates praying about a religion to see if it might be true. (p. 68)

Christian scholar F. F. Bruce states: "We are then, the offspring of God, says Paul, not in any pantheistic sense but in the sense of the biblical doctrine of man, as beings created by God in his own image." (p. 116)
Is it wrong to quote pagans?

The authors condemn Milton R. Hunter for referencing pagan beliefs concerning the deification of men when speaking of Latter-day Saint beliefs concerning this doctrine (p. 118). Yet Paul found nothing wrong with quoting pagans in support of the truth (Acts 17:28), and the authors are willing enough to refer to Paul, even when he is quoting pagans (pp. 10, 67–68).

Can true Christians have personal opinions?

McKeever and Johnson insist that the variances and vagaries of Christian doctrine are unimportant because all Christians have a set core of beliefs and this core of beliefs is what defines them as Christians (pp. 14–15, 21); however, they make an issue of the fact that Mormons disagree among themselves regarding various speculations and theories that are not considered official Latter-day Saint teachings (p. 34).

Is it in the scriptures?

McKeever and Johnson find fault with the fact that many Latter-day Saint beliefs and ordinances are not drawn word for word from the scriptures (pp. 34–37). Yet the definition of the Trinity given by the authors (p. 183) is not found in the Bible; rather (as the authors point out), it is a derivative of the Athanasian Creed which was composed centuries after the death of Christ.

Are prophets scientists?

McKeever and Johnson seem to think that statements made by Church leaders which are not accurate according to modern scientific views indicate that these leaders can’t be trusted to provide correct information regarding the will of God (p. 35). Yet they do not judge so harshly the writings of the Bible that include such statements as “All fowls that creep, going upon all four . . .” (Leviticus 11:20, KJV) and “he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed . . .” (Joshua 10:12–13, KJV).
Does the word of God change?

According to McKeever and Johnson, "If the words of the prophet are of equal validity to the written word, Mormons cannot be so quick to distance themselves from past teachings" (p. 37). Yet, presumably, McKeever and Johnson do not make regular burnt offerings of a dove or lamb to the Lord, nor is it likely that they believe that male children must be circumcised. One might say that McKeever and Johnson are distancing "themselves from past teachings" of the Bible by not following the Mosaic law—unless one, perhaps, accepts that each successive prophet instructs the Church to follow the Lord’s will in the manner that is pleasing to the Lord at that time.

Can truth change?

The authors reason, "If ‘truth’ can change with the induction of a new Mormon prophet, then Mormons really are doing nothing more than trusting in a mere mortal man" (p. 39). If truth cannot change (or, as is actually the case, be clarified or expanded), with the induction of a new prophet, then one must of necessity reject the "truths" revealed by Christ since these truths were certainly a large change from many of the "truths" that were taught in the Old Testament (for examples, see Matthew 5:21–22, 27–28, 31–44).

Is the Bible translated correctly?

The authors condemn the Latter-day Saint Church for approaching the Bible with the caution that it is the word of God "as far as it is translated correctly" (pp. 45–53). But the authors themselves admit that when it comes to Bible translations, "Some are good and some are not so good" (p. 52).

Logical and Consistent Criteria?

Another characteristic of a reasonable argument is the use of logical and consistent methods of weighing evidence. Yet McKeever and Johnson frequently use standards of measuring "truth" that would condemn their own beliefs as well as Latter-
day Saint doctrine. It is inconsistent to apply one standard of measurement to living prophets and nonbiblical Latter-day Saint scriptures, and another standard to biblical prophets and scriptures. In addition, many of the arguments used by the authors are shown to be sheer nonsense when taken to their logical conclusion. For example:

**Do Christians sects squabble with each other?**

The authors suggest that Mormons can’t be Christians because some of the leaders of the Latter-day Saint Church have insulted the ministers of other Christian churches and condemned the doctrines of other Christian churches (pp. 15-20).

Taking this argument to its logical conclusion, one must reason that all Christian churches who find something wrong with the beliefs of other Christian churches must be excluded from the ranks of Christianity. This is an interesting, if not entirely new, approach to defining the term “Christian,” but hardly practical given that Christian churches have always squabbled amongst themselves over which creed is correct, and which creed is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Indeed, members of Christian churches have made a habit of not only insulting each other, but actually killing each other over such issues.

If, perchance, the world were to accept as a valid definition of Christianity: *Those who never insult or find fault with the doctrines or positions of other Christian churches*, the only true Christian sects would be the “liberal denominations and other groups which place ecumenicism above doctrinal purity” (p. 21). Since the authors find fault with such liberal denominations, the authors would necessarily be excluded from the ranks of Christianity.

**Should we condemn all beliefs that might foster sinful pride?**

The authors condemn “temple Mormonism” because it “fosters a class society and feeds the ego of those who hold temple recommends. The fact that these Mormons are found ‘worthy’ places them in a class above those who do not hold recommends. Like the Pharisee of Luke 18, this sinful attitude of
pride can easily become a reality in the Mormon’s life” (p. 96). Yet the authors do not condemn Christianity, even though the belief that one is saved, while others are damned, can foster a class society and feed the ego of those who are “saved”—thus causing a sinful attitude of pride to become a reality in a Christian’s life.

Did it really happen?

In chapter two the authors ask, “Which first vision account should we believe?” (p. 23). The criteria that are used in chapter two to judge if historical events are real or imagined may be summarized as follows: If an important event is reported without variance or error, it actually happened. If an important event is reported with variance or error, it did not actually happen (pp. 23–31).

Putting aside the fact that few events in the Bible would pass this test, would other important events happening within Joseph Smith’s lifetime pass the author’s criteria? The authors give us the information that the date on which Alvin died was recorded as “November 19th, 1824 in the 27th year of his age” in the first printing of the official account of the First Vision, yet was changed to “November 19th, 1823” in printings made after 1981, and while the death date on Alvin’s headstone agrees with the post-1981 printings of the First Vision, the grave marker says he was twenty-five years old, not twenty-seven (pp. 26–27). According to McKeever and Johnson’s criteria, when one considers all the inconsistencies that exist in the reports of Alvin’s death, one may conclude that Alvin did not actually die.

How strong is the power of God?

In chapter two of the book, McKeever and Johnson question the existence of the gold plates. Would it be possible, they ask, for Joseph Smith to carry plates made of pure gold, weighing at least

3 For example, consider the differences between the three accounts of the vision of Paul as recorded in Acts 9:1–31, Acts 22:3–21, and Acts 26:9–21, or the variances in the four Gospel accounts of the women going to Jesus’ empty tomb early in the morning after the resurrection, as recorded in Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1, Luke 24:10, and John 20:1.
one hundred pounds, while running, jumping and fighting off attackers? (p. 28). It is inconsistent of the authors to question Joseph Smith’s ability to run with a mere one hundred pounds under his arm when they themselves assert that “It is by God”s Word, the Bible, that all things are compared” (p. 81). The Bible includes the story of Samson, a man who was able to carry the door of the gate of Gaza to the top of a hill (Judges 16:3) and pull down the supporting pillars of a large house (Judges 16:28–30).

**FARMS vs. Moroni?**

The authors also pit FARMS against the angel Moroni in an attempt to prove that the gold plates never existed. The FARMS bulletin cover article “Were the Gold Plates Gold?” suggests that the golden plates might have been made of an alloy called “tumbaga,” which consists of a mixture of gold and copper. McKeever and Johnson argue,

> If the plates were really made of tumbaga, why didn’t the angel say, “There was a book deposited, written upon copper plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent?” Because 8k means the metal was only about 33% gold, it probably would have been more correct to say the plates were copper, since roughly 66% of the plates would be composed of that metal. (p. 29)

First, I must say that it is rather absurd of the authors to attempt to hold Moroni, Joseph Smith, or any one else involved with the gold plates accountable for what the researchers at FARMS theorize about the composition of the plates. But supposing that the FARMS researchers are correct and the plates were made of tumbaga, it is absurd to insist that the plates should be called “copper,” whatever the percentage of copper they might have contained, since “gold” refers to color as well as composition. Tumbaga is “gold” and not “copper” in color.
Unsupported Statements

Logical reasoning does not make use of unsupported or unproven statements, yet such statements occur with liberal frequency between the pages of McKeever and Johnson’s book. For example:

- “Again, thanks to Wesley Walters, the court records from 1826 have been discovered to show that Smith was arrested, tried, and convicted for using this stone in his scam operations” (p. 30). But Walters’s views have not gone unchallenged. At least one study of Walters’s evidence, considered within the context of the legal setting of 1826, concludes that “in 1826 Joseph Smith was indeed charged and tried for being a disorderly person and that he was acquitted.”

- “Such conflicting testimony about the different accounts would not make a strong case in a court of law” (p. 31). The authors reference no kind of expert legal opinion to support this statement.

- “This is one reason why the Latter-day Saint Church would rather have prospective converts search for truth through subjective feelings rather than objective evidence” (p. 31). The authors do not reference their claim that the Latter-day Saint Church teaches its converts to search for truth through subjective feelings. I know of no church publication which teaches either members or converts to use “subjective feelings” as a basis for determining truth.

Given the examples of inconsistent reasoning and inaccurate or unsupported statements which can be found in McKeever and Johnson’s publication, I would have to judge their attempt to appeal to the Latter-day Saint member through logic and reason a failure.

Using the Word of God?

The authors make use of a fair number of scriptural passages to support their arguments. In this manner, one might say that they have fulfilled their goal to use the “word of God” in an

---

attempt to prove that Latter-day Saint doctrine is in error. The difficulty with the authors’ task in this area, however, is that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not likely to agree with many of the authors’ interpretations of scriptures. For example:

The authors quote 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” to support the idea that the only written authority for life and faith is the canonized Bible (p. 177). Yet a Latter-day Saint reading this scripture would include within the definition of “all scripture” the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and any other scriptures which might be brought forth by God in the future.

The authors also quote Hebrews 1:1–2: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” to support the idea that Jesus is the living prophet guiding the church today (p. 81). Mormons certainly accept that Christ is at the head of the Church, but the authors seem to be interpreting this scripture to mean that Christ is the last of the prophets and that no other living prophet will be appointed to guide and direct the church on earth. This scripture makes no such claims, nor does any other passage in the Bible.

In short, it is not sufficient to simply quote scripture in order to prove a point of doctrine. Where no consensus on interpretation of scriptures exists, partners in a discussion must, as the authors suggest is necessary on some occasions, “agree to disagree” (p. 10).

Conclusions

A book which truly concentrated on logical arguments that would appeal to the reasoning of informed, faithful members of the Church might have been interesting. But Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend is not that book. Indeed, it is my opinion that the arguments and logic used in McKeever and Johnson’s book were designed to appeal to the belief systems of evangelical
Christians, not Mormons. As such, the book might be an effective tool for convincing non-Mormon Christians that the doctrines of the Latter-day Saint Church are different from the doctrines of evangelical Christianity, but it is not likely to convince many Latter-day Saints that the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are in error.

Uncritical Theory and Thin Description: The Resistance to History

Reviewed by Alan Goff

"Show a Russian schoolboy," he writes, "a map of the stars, which he knows nothing about, and he will return the map next day with corrections on it."

—Dostoyevski

"Recent literary theory," according to Brent Metcalfe, "focuses on the complex and attenuated relation between language and the real world" (p. 168 n. 48). For Metcalfe, literary and narrative theory undermine the historical claims of the Book of Mormon: "It is as risky for apologists to stake claims of Book of Mormon historicity on evidence from literary studies as it is on evidence from theories of geography. In fact, emphasis on literary phenomena may be even more precarious, since careful attention to literary features underscores the complicated relation between language and reality" (p. 171).

You can’t hear the tone of my voice; instead, imagine the tone you hear when the pediatrician on call answers your worried page and asks you what the problem is. You tell the doctor you think your child has the measles. She asks for the symptoms, then (with only the tone of voice expressing the exasperation) implies that she wouldn’t have spent all those years at the university and in medical school, if just anyone could diagnose the difference between measles and twenty other viral infections simply by
reading a few passages from a book on child-rearing and examining a few physical symptoms.

Brent Metcalfe borrows the titles of a few works on literary and narrative theory and then concludes that such theory undermines the historical claims of the Book of Mormon. This doesn’t mean that Metcalfe has accurately translated that theory into his study of things Mormon.

In the eighteenth century, modernity was rapidly expanding human knowledge based on the scientific method. Even before that, the Renaissance was slowly freeing humanity from the blinders of religious belief; but throughout, an undercurrent of skepticism prevented the wholesale acceptance of the idea that the human mind is capable of apprehending the world free of all subjective contaminants: Rabelais, Shakespeare, and Montaigne represent this counter-Renaissance. But as the Enlightenment progressed, such doubts were largely dismissed under the unquestioned material and scientific improvement brought about by the new modes of thought.

Under the tutelage of Henri de Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the word *positivism* to name the ultimate conception of scientific approach to human understanding. Comte thought that all knowledge went through successive stages: a religious or theological stage (with personal gods), then a metaphysical stage (with impersonal forces), and a positive stage (with laws discovered by observation and experience). Since these stages were progressive, Comte held that in his thought humanity had reached the highest achievement of understanding. After 1845, Comte did something strange with this conception of human understanding: he organized a liturgy and a church based on Catholic ritual yet absent from the traditional Catholic notions of deity (in the belief that society depended on ritual and belief in order to maintain order). His was what he called “a religion of humanity.” The human mind and the scientific method were the objects of worship in this new religion.

Later positivists were largely unaware of the founder’s religious heresies or quietly discarded them. Since its inception in the late nineteenth century (it is the name only that was coined by Comte, because philosophers such as David Hume and John Locke had previously advanced many of the tenets of what we call
positivism went through many historical variations as it became dominant in every knowledge discipline: from history to religious studies, from sociology to political science, from economics to technical writing, from literary criticism to biblical criticism. This hegemony reigned supreme through the 1960s, when it came under such withering attack that the term positivist became a term of abuse.

By the 1980s even those who still adhered to some of the positivist claims vehemently denied that they were positivists. For example, positivists assert they can free themselves from what they call "subjective" contaminants, from history and ideology. Traditionally, in historiography, these claims follow stereotypical patterns: historians claim neutrality or objectivity; historians insist that history must be value-free; historians assume scientific status for their accounts through an appeal to a method which presumably frees them from the vagaries of interpretation; historians claim access to brute, uninterpreted facts (using an appeal to archival or primary sources); historians claim that membership in certain groups (religious, political) corrupts objectivity; historians claim that empirical knowledge is the only source of genuine knowledge (therefore, usually, excluding religion, poetry, and metaphysics from the possibility of generating anything except illusions).

These standard positivist claims have, of course, come under sharp attack from a number of quarters, particularly since the 1960s: Continental philosophy had always been less committed to positivism than had Anglo-American analytic philosophy. But when Anglo-American philosophy made the linguistic turn, it emphasized how inevitably our linguistic options, theories, and ideological commitments affect our descriptions of the world. Continental philosophy produced philosophers such as Gadamer, Foucault, and Derrida who stressed the fact that human perspective is ubiquitous and those who think they discard such influences as ideology and politics are deluded. In the late 1960s these and other antipositivist positions (American pragmatism, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein) began to exert broad influence, questioning and undermining the positivism that had held sway in academic disciplines for nearly a century (in various forms such as the positivism of Comte and later Logical Positivism). This postpositivist position was largely disseminated in the United
States (which had been particularly vulnerable to positivism and had carried it to extremes unknown in the rest of the world) through literary and narrative theory.

So yes, Metcalfe is right that literary and narrative theory have radically undermined the main positivist tenet that the researcher can find some way to describe reality from some position free of ideology. Unfortunately, Metcalfe is committed to several versions of that same positivism which claims that “it is only the person I disagree with who has an ideology.” I will in this essay explore only two of Metcalfe’s positivist claims and demonstrate how thoroughly Metcalfe distorts antipositivist literary and narrative theory so that it seems to support his essentially positivist doctrine.

Metcalf e is right to claim that literary and narrative theory “focuses on the complex and attenuated relation between language and the real world,” but he never applies that claim to his own position. It is as if he himself doesn’t claim that his explanation of the Book of Mormon is more faithful to reality than those he opposes. If his claim is true, that “it is as risky for apologists to stake claims of Book of Mormon historicity on evidence from literary studies as it is on evidence from theories of geography. In fact, emphasis on literary phenomena may be even more precarious, since careful attention to literary features underscores the complicated relation between language and reality,” then it might also be true that narrative and literary theory undermine his own claims. At this point I’ll give away the ending of my story; narrative and literary theory do not address the Book of Mormon, so Metcalfe has yet to demonstrate that they undermine its truth claims. But they do specifically undermine Metcalfe’s speculations advanced in this and other essays.

Some other venue will no doubt provide the opportunity to explore other positivist claims Metcalfe makes; here I restrict myself to two: (1) Metcalfe claims that, unlike those nasty “apologists,” he begins from ideologically neutral presuppositions, uses a neutral method, and moves to a neutral conclusion, that he has no ideological commitments that lead him to predetermined conclusions: “Both apologetic and critical scholars are led by prior assumptions, but they differ fundamentally. Apologists assume that the Book of Mormon is historical, and from this they develop methods to sustain authenticity. The critical
scholar’s interpretation depends not on a proposition made by a
text or tradition but on a methodology for exploring the broader
context which structures and authorizes such claims. Ideally,
within the critical mode, methods lead to conclusions instead of
conclusions leading to methods” (p. 156). Instead, the over­
whelmingly dominant theme of literary and narrative theory is
that ideology is inevitable. Metcalfe begins from a particularly
uncritical positivist ideology, selects a method to support that ide­
ology, and concludes with the same ideological commitments.

Additionally, Metcalfe claims (2) that Book of Mormon his­
toricity is imperiled because the book has literary patterns in it.
Positivists have always made a sharp distinction between literature
and history, between fact and fiction. Metcalfe believes that since
an exodus motif is included in the Book of Mormon, the book is a
work of fiction rather than history because to him it seems appar­
tent that authentic history does not contain complex literary pat­
terns:

The length of the journey (three days) seems to depend
on a literary motif from Exodus. Given this depend­
ence, one wonders how Sorenson can confidently iden­
tify the lengths of other Book of Mormon migrations,
which may also be motific or symbolic rather than lit­
teral, especially when points of departure and arrival are
not known. In other words, the specific details of a
history are at worst compromised by, and at best are
always filtered through, literary forms and conventions
as well as linguistic structures. (pp. 161–62)

Metcalfe also posits that the historical nature of the Book of
Mormon is endangered by literary patterns because two kings
(Noah and Riplakish) are so similar that you can’t be sure that
they are not the product of the same mind (Joseph Smith’s):
“Everything we know about the Jaredite ruler bears an analogue
to the corrupt Nephite king. These mirroring suggest that one
narrative may depend on the other, and that only one, or perhaps
neither, represents a factual account of historical events” (p. 170).
Positivist historiography is an epistemological position so it is
important to reiterate Metcalfe’s positivist conception of historical
fact. The truth is that literary and narrative theory was the initial
vehicle of antipositivist positions in the United States. Because literary and narrative theory was so dominant, it had a broad influence over other disciplines, especially historiography. Historiography has been so narrativized and literaturized over the past thirty years that the dominant element in historiography advances the position that history is a form of literature. It is literary and narrative theory (combined with historiography) that has dramatically undermined Metcalfe's claims.

Metcalfe is not alone among revisionist Mormon researchers in refusing to historicize his own terminology and ideas. He is, however, unusual in referring his readers to the very sources which have overturned the positivism he denies and yet advances at the same time. Let me state the matter baldly: Metcalfe has practiced a transparent deception on the readers of Dialogue, a deception the editors had a responsibility to correct. Metcalfe refers his readers to fifteen sources in literary and narrative theory (p. 168 n. 48). If Metcalfe had read and understood them, he would have sensed that these sources undermine his own epistemological and historiographical claims.

Radical changes have occurred in all disciplines over the past thirty years. The broad impact of literary and narrative theory in a range of disciplines is foremost among those changes. Metcalfe is alone among revisionist historians and dilettantes in referring to the very sources that disable his position. Mormon historians make few if any references to the historiographical debate going on in professional journals about history and literature, history and objectivity. The positivist claims of certain revisionist Mormon historians have long been abandoned in historiographical circles. But Metcalfe is the first of these writers in attempting to align a narrative and literary theory that undermines his claims with his own position, simplistically implying that it supports rather than destroys that position. So a brief introduction to literary and narrative theory is in order.

**Positivism and Ideology**

Metcalfe, of course, denies that he is a positivist. Since positivism came under withering attack in the 1960s, few researchers have been willing to admit to the charge. Instead the term has lost
much of its epistemological content and is now a mere epithet. Not only does Metcalfe deny that he is a positivist, he reverses the charges and claims that his critics are the positivists: "Many hermeneutical apologists such as Midgley adopt the positivism they so readily condemn. They repudiate the possibility of historical objectivity in an empirical sense but insist on the historical objectivity of early Mormonism’s truth claims in a religious or confessional sense" (p. 155 n. 7). Note here that Metcalfe doesn’t charge Midgley with being a positivist by saying that Midgley makes standard positivist claims to academic neutrality, to value-free historical inquiry, to history free of all metaphysics, to history without the intrusion of literary and narrative patterns, to history without ideological preconceptions. Metcalfe turns Midgley into a positivist merely because Midgley believes that the Book of Mormon is an authentic history.

The word positivist did not enter the lexicon of Mormon history until Thomas G. Alexander responded to Louis Midgley’s and David Bohn’s claims that this revisionist history uncritically adopted a wholesale positivism. Alexander’s response was that positivism is impossible in the human studies and is relegated only to the natural sciences.¹ This first apology for positivism does what all since have done: define the term in such a way that Mormon historians cannot be positivists while they continue to make some positivist claims. No other person uses the term positivism in the way Alexander does. In fact, those acquainted with the historiographical literature often note how history was durably dominated by positivism. Take the following as an example: "The positivist heritage is alive and well among American historians, narrowing their methodological debates and de-sensitizing them to some of the most interesting developments in modern historical thought."² Historiographers note that until the 1960s history was dominated by positivism and that after some improvement in moving away from positivism historical studies regressed toward it.

We need to return to the level of ideas themselves—to define the content of the regression toward positivism. I have referred to it as “primitive” in order to distinguish it from the neopositivism of twentieth-century analytic philosophy, which, although of little help to historians, is at least intellectually fastidious. The sort of positivism I am speaking of harks back, rather, to the nineteenth century in its epistemological naïveté.

Early in this essay I referred to the attitude with which sophisticated historians approached their middle-level generalizations or paradigms. I suggested that they recognized what was arbitrary in their constructions and that they made no claim to possessing “the truth.” I further specified that they took account of the gap between themselves and their data, of the fact that the data almost never conveyed an unambiguous message and that even the simplest narrative carried along with it a freight of interpretation. All these postulates the positivist-minded historians of today implicitly deny.

I say “implicitly” because most of the time the epistemology of positivism is not spelled out. It is simply taken for granted. But what it amounts to is the conviction, first, that the data are “out there” somewhere and need only be located; second, that a particular historian has no right to go beyond the obvious meanings that other historians will readily recognize as valid—to transcend the conventionally apparent lies in the dangerous realm of guesswork or inference, or possibly of the imagination.3

Thomas Alexander’s mistakes in defining the term positivism are not my primary concern. But I want to place Metcalfe in his historical context. Since Alexander, revisionists have repeatedly denied that they are positivists while making straightforward positivist claims.

Philip L. Barlow, for example, claims that only believers begin from a metaphysical point of view, while the historian eschews metaphysics, leaving that to poets, theologians and metaphysicians.\(^4\) No more positivist claim exists than this one. This claim is challenged by one of Metcalfe’s sources on literary and historical theory, Hayden White,\(^5\) and is clearly labeled as positivism by others.\(^6\) A pattern is beginning to emerge: Barlow too denies he subscribes to positivism.\(^7\) Edward H. Ashment makes a number of positivist claims, while continuing to claim that he is no positivist.\(^8\) He asserts that empirical knowledge is the only form of knowledge and, since religious knowledge does not measure up, it is pseudoknowledge.\(^9\) He also maintains that history needs to be value-free.\(^10\) Ashment also misunderstands positivism by claiming that it was a product of the nineteenth century (which is true) but didn’t infect the twentieth (which is not).\(^11\) What is more unusual, Ashment professes that it is a positivist position to say that historical facts can speak for themselves,\(^12\) yet he makes the assertion

\(^7\) Barlow, Mormons and the Bible, xvi.
\(^8\) Edward H. Ashment, “Canon and the Historian,” a draft of a paper presented at the Mormon History Association Meetings (1 June 1991), 11.
\(^9\) Ibid., 4.
\(^10\) Ibid., 5.
\(^11\) Ibid., 11–12.
\(^12\) Edward H. Ashment, “Historiography of the Canon,” Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1992), 301 n. 53. This is the published version of Ashment’s “Canon and the Historian,” cited above. Ashment here also manufactures the charge that the real positivists are those who call him a positivist: “Thus Mormon apologists plead positivistically to ‘let Joseph Smith speak for himself.’ ” Yet Ashment
that to the historian there are facts that speak for themselves, brute facts free of all interpretation.\textsuperscript{13}

Recently, Marvin S. Hill in his 1993 presidential address to the Mormon History Association also confused issues of positivism. Not content with the definition as it is used by "historians, social scientists, and philosophers," Hill has provided a new definition (actually a couple of definitions) because he found these other definitions too "complex and elaborate," too "technical."\textsuperscript{14} For those who disagree with him about the historical nature of the Book of Mormon, Hill defines positivism as any appeal to empirical evidence. "I mean," he wrote, "history that is taken to be potentially verifiable."\textsuperscript{15} Hill then lists a string of scholars he calls positivist, equivocates on the definition, and defines positivism quite differently for those with whom he agrees. What they do, he describes as interdisciplinary, empathetic, tentative, and therefore free of positivism.\textsuperscript{16} Ironically, it is these so-called "new Mormon historians [who] were the first group of historians studying Mormon history to break with the positivistic tradition and write in a more tentative way about the Mormon past."\textsuperscript{17} Needless to say, Hill is the only author I have read who defines positivism as any appeal to empirical evidence. If Hill were to apply this standard consistently, then he would have to call all historians positivists.

This is the historical context into which we need to place Metcalfe's claims. Certain Mormon historians have given convoluted and confused definitions of positivism in order to do two things: (1) to deny that they are positivists while (2) still making positivist epistemological claims. In Ashment, Metcalfe, and Hill we have a third objective—to charge those who question their revisionist agenda with being positivists, while they continue their own work with positivist assumptions. Even on the one occasion when a revisionist historian refers to a source for a definition of positivism provides no bibliographical trail so we can see such references. This is real

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 292–93.

\textsuperscript{14} Marvin S. Hill, "Positivism or Subjectivism? Some Reflections on a Mormon Historical Dilemma," \textit{Journal of Mormon History} 20/1 (Spring 1994): 3 n. 5.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
(Hill to Webster’s *New Twentieth-Century Unabridged Dictionary*), it is a distortion of the source. The historical context into which we need to place such struggles is one in which it is bad to be called a positivist but apparently not bad to be one. Careful attention to positivism shows that Metcalfe’s claim that he works from neutral presuppositions to neutral method to neutral conclusions is simply not true. Instead, his claims are ideological.

**Narrative and Ideology**

This brings us to the next point. If I were to put fifteen sources together that refute Metcalfe’s claim that he has no ideology, I would be hard pressed to come up with a better list than Metcalfe cites. The most insistent claim in recent literary and narrative theory (including historiography, political science, economics, sociology, and so many other disciplines) is that all positions are ideologically inscribed.

The issue of ideology points to the fact that there is no value-neutral mode of employment, explanation, or even description of any field of events, whether imaginary or real, and suggests that the very use of language itself implies or entails a specific posture before the world which is ethical, ideological, or more generally political: not only all interpretation, but also all language is politically contaminated.  

“Schools of historical interpretation are never politically neutral. Overall views of the past are tied in countless ways to visions of the present and future. Which is to say that they are, in a broad sense, ‘ideological.’ ”  

The answer then is not to deny ideology as a positivist would, but to expose the implications of your own ideology. Metcalfe’s starting point in his reading of the Book of Mormon is no less ideological than that of his opponents; his is in fact more ideological because it denies and suppresses its own ideological foundation: “Every historical account of any

---

18 White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 129.
scope or profundity presupposes a specific set of ideological commitments in the very notions of ‘science,’ ‘objectivity,’ and ‘explanation’ which inform it.” Remember that Hayden White is one source Metcalfe refers his readers to in order to confirm the impact of literary and narrative theory on current conceptions of history and reality. “Historians of historical thought often lament the intrusion of such manifestly ideological elements into earlier historians’ efforts to portray the past ‘objectively.’ But more often they reserve such lamentation for the assessment of the work of historians representing ideological positions different from their own.” If White had put the name “Metcalfe” across this passage it couldn’t more specifically deny Metcalfe’s claims.

The impact of narrative and literary theory has been to deny Metcalfe’s claim that he has an inside track to reality free from ideology while those who disagree with him interpret ideologically. Hence, according to White, “Just as every ideology is attended by a specific idea of history and its processes, so too, I maintain, is every idea of history attended by specifically determinable ideological implications.” Metcalfe attempts to take credit for a position that undermines his, to assimilate it, to imply that these fifteen sources he cites actually support his position.

This new view of ideology has largely entered American academic debate through literary theory. It owes much to Althusser, who claimed that ideology grounds the interpretation that follows. You don’t have an interpretation or a reading until you have an ideology. The facts then are theory- and ideology-laden.

There does, in fact, appear to be an irreducible ideological component in every historical account of reality. That is to say, simply because history is not a science, or is at best a protoscience with specifically determinable nonscientific elements in its constitution, the very claim to have discerned some kind of formal coherence in the historical record brings with it theories of the nature of the historical world and of historical

---

20 White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 68.
21 Ibid., 69.
knowledge itself which have ideological implications for attempts to understand "the present," however this "present" is defined.\textsuperscript{23}

It is absolutely essential to put Metcalfe’s positivist claim that he is free of ideology into a certain historical context. "Exposing an ideology’s outlines is always important. It’s even more important when that ideology is working to deny ideology and history."\textsuperscript{24} Revisionist historians resist the historicizing of their own claims to knowledge. That they are anti-historical in this manner doesn’t mean their readers can afford to be. The word ideology hasn’t, unfortunately, entered the lexicon of revisionist Mormon historians. The next step is to refer to the dominant discourse in literary theory and historiography to demonstrate how far the disciplinary leaders have moved beyond these positivist claims.

**Writing History, Writing Literature**

I apologize for dealing with these theoretical concerns in such a cursory manner. I expect to return to them at greater length elsewhere. My intention in raising them is to demonstrate that Metcalfe in particular and revisionist Mormon historians in general are a full thirty years behind their discipline. But these are preliminary issues, since my real goal is to get to a reading of the Book of Mormon. But first I must attend to the second of Metcalfe’s positivist claims.

Metcalfe asserts that history and literature are distinct entities and that any narrative which demonstrates literary patterns forfeits its claim to being authentic history. Needless to say, this claim is directly contrary to the main themes of narrative theory, literary theory, and historiography. In fact, Paul Ricoeur has labeled this claim positivist. Ricoeur notes the way “neo-positivists” conceptualize the history/fiction dichotomy: “History speaks of the real as past; stories speak of the unreal as fictional. Or to use the terminology familiar to the analytic philosophy of neo-positivistic

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 21.

origins, a break concerning truth claims separates 'empirical narratives' from 'fictional narratives.' "  

For Ricoeur, as for the dominant strain of narrative theory, no sharp distinction is visible between historical narrative and fictional narrative: they both use the same literary devices to make sense of human temporality:

So if we wish to demonstrate that the narrative genre as a whole refers to historicity as a whole, it is necessary to shatter the appearance of asymmetry between true narrative and fictional narrative at the level of reference. In other words, it must be shown that all narratives make, in a certain sense, a referential claim.

The argument divides into three steps. (1) It is necessary to establish that there is more fiction in history than the positivist conception of history admits. (2) Then it must be shown that fiction in general, and narrative fiction in particular, are more mimetic than the same positivism allows. (3) These two prior points being granted, I shall suggest that the references of empirical narrative and fictional narrative cross upon what I provisionally called historicity or the historical condition of man.  

Ricoeur represents the main line of thought in narrative theory. As narrative theory made further and further inroads into historiography in the seventies and eighties, the tightly controlled boundary between literature and fiction that Metcalfe patrols seemed less plausible. The historian also plots and emplots the narrative. The historian just doesn't find the meaning of a text in the text but establishes it in a dialectical relationship between text and the reader. But note that such claims for the sharp division between history and fiction are labeled positivistic by real theorists:

26 Ibid., 289.
The tendency, in contemporary English biblical studies, is to consider literary-critical and historical aspects of theological reflection as sharply distinct and to concentrate on the latter to the neglect of the former. This tendency derives from a period when positivistic conceptions of historical understanding went hand-in-hand with non-cognitive accounts of literary and poetic statement (which carried the implication that the fruit of literary-critical reflection on the biblical narratives could only be “subjective” in character). But if it has sometimes been assumed (in theology and elsewhere) that there is a “natural tension between the historian and literary critic,” there is no timeless validity to this assumption.27

Lash then continues to note that Gadamer did not want to erase the line between fiction and history but to point to the ways they share narrative elements.

By now you should see that Metcalfe’s conception of fiction and history is wrong-headed and underwritten by his positivist ideology. It should not surprise us to see Metcalfe find methods to support that positivist understanding. His central mistakes are to assume that historians have some brute access to historical fact, and that historians do not use literary tools to shape their narratives.

For positivism, the task of history is to uncover the facts which are, as it were, buried in documents, just like, as Leibniz would have said, the statue of Hercules was lying dormant in the veins of marble. Against the positivist conception of the historical fact, more recent epistemology emphasises the “imaginative reconstruction” which characterizes the work of the historian.28

This movement to see the similarities between literature and history has been taken up by historiographers, especially Hayden

White, Hans Kellner, David Harlan, and Linda Orr. Notice how Ricoeur refers to some of Metcalfe's fifteen sources, but to opposite effect:

However, the decisive step was taken when categories stemming from literary criticism, and more precisely from the semiotics of the narrative, were transferred to the field of history. History could then be explicitly treated as a "literary artefact," and the writing of history began to be reinterpreted according to the categories which were variously called "semiotic," "symbolic," and "poetic." In this respect, the most influential works were Auerbach's Mimesis, Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism and Kenneth Burke's A Grammar of Motives, to which we may add the critique of the visual arts in Gombrich's Art and Illusion and the general theory of symbolic representation in Nelson Goodman's Languages of Art. These works have given rise to a general concept of the fictional representation of reality, the horizon of which is sufficiently broad to encompass both the writing of history and fiction, whether the latter be literary, pictorial or plastic.

We find in the work of Hayden White a good illustration of this "poetic" approach to the writing of history. . . . It would remain to be shown that contemporary historians, whose university status makes them more concerned to present themselves as "scientific" rather than "literary," lend themselves to the same analysis. Nevertheless, what seems to me to be of general significance in White's study is his attempt to establish, initially at the level of plot, the correlation between works of fiction and works of history.29

Ricoeur is, of course, a philosopher. But historians have been more than eager to develop these narrative insights:

29 Ibid., 290.
The silent shared conspiracy of all historians (who otherwise agree on nothing these days) is to talk about the past as though it were really “there.” The whole of historical discourse is calculated to induce a sense of referential reality in a conceptual field with no external reference at all.

History is meaning imposed on time by means of language: history imposes syntax on time. As the form of writing whose central purpose is to affirm our consciousness of a shared experience over generations of one external and real world, history has a great investment in mimesis—the ability of language to imitate reality. Here, of course, is where historians balk, for, alas, the mimetic abilities of prose are common to fiction and history without distinction. Fiction’s persuasive force, its “sense of reality,” results from an author’s ability to offer the reader a suggestive array of fictional elements that satisfy the requirements of possible reality in the shared world of writer and reader. The historian, using techniques that differ only a little from those of a novelist, has to persuade the reader not only of the possible reality of his array of verbal elements, but that those on display in the text are “guaranteed” by their relation (reference, logical inference) to things outside the text, and thus the result is a real mimesis.30

Historians have done the narrativizing of history in a way that must strike terror into the heart of positivist historians

The traditional argument would be to differentiate between factual and fictional narrations. Historical narration is usually defined as dealing only with facts and not with fictions. This differentiation is very problematical, and finally not convincing, because the all-important sense of history lies beyond the distinction between fiction and fact. In fact it is absolutely mis-

---

leading—and arises from a good deal of hidden and suppressed positivism—to call everything in historiography fiction which is not a fact in the sense of a hard datum.31

In fact, Metcalfe’s fifteen sources deal relentlessly with this distinction between literature and history. I refer the reader to White’s three sources cited by Metcalfe, the collection *On Narrative from Critical Inquiry*, Kermode’s study, Martin’s book, and the two books by Alter and Sternberg. The latter two sources deal specifically with the positivist distinction between fiction and history in biblical narrative, but in a way that undermines Metcalfe’s claims.

**Narrative and Repetitions**

The doubling of Pharaoh’s dreams means that the thing is fixed by God.

—Genesis 41:32 RSV

If we analyze readings of biblical narrative grounded on recent narrative theory, we find that Metcalfe’s positivist conception of narrative relationships is attacked by the narrative theorists he cites. According to Metcalfe, “everything we know about the Jaredite ruler bears an analogue to the corrupt Nephite king. These mirrorings suggest that one narrative may depend on the other, and that only one, or perhaps neither, represents a factual account of historical events” (p. 170). From Metcalfe’s view, literary elements in a story are evidence of artful, poetic writing, and for him history is anything but artful or poetic:

It is as risky for apologists to stake claims of Book of Mormon historicity on evidence from literary studies as it is on evidence from theories of geography. In fact, emphasis on literary phenomena may be even more precarious, since careful attention to literary features underscores the complicated relation between language

---

31 Ibid., 89.
and reality. Even if one could plausibly argue for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon within this context, the historicity of every Book of Mormon person and event would be suspect. Apologists must delineate why sacred fiction has greater religious merit when written by ancient prophets than a nineteenth-century prophet. (p. 171)

Here is the crux of Metcalfe’s positivist narrative theory. Remember Metcalfe’s claims about moving only from method to conclusion? Metcalfe begins from an ideological assumption (Joseph wrote the Book of Mormon), finds a method to support that presupposition (if two narratives are similar they must be the product of the same mind), and moves to a conclusion that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon (p. 169 n. 51). Such reasoning is directly refuted by theorists working on biblical narrative. How do exegetes analyze the relationship between similar stories? When we have grasped their thinking, we may then return to Metcalfe’s interpretation.

The Book of Mormon has a considerable number of narrative analogies—stories similar to other stories in the book or to biblical stories. The normal pattern for revisionists when they come across these stories is to dismiss the book as a superficial plagiary, either of the Bible or of itself. But literary theorists have developed sophisticated theories of intertextuality and allusion over the past three decades that need to be accounted for before Metcalfe concludes that Joseph Smith plagiarized himself.

There is no book more intertextual than the Book of Mormon, other than the Bible. Hebrew narrative, biblical narrative, relishes repetition.

It is fascinating to see what biblical critics have made of these repetitions. For 100 years, when biblical scholars came across the three wife-sister stories in Genesis (12:10–29; 20; 26), they puzzled over how three so similar stories could be in such close proximity. Did biblical scholars conclude that these three stories must be the product of the same mind because they are so similar to each other? No, the opposite happened because these biblical scholars had different ideological axes to grind. Theirs was an atomistic approach while Metcalfe’s is holistic—he wants all the book to be the product of one author. So biblical scholars have
been vexed by these three stories, attributing two of the stories to the hypothetical J author and one to E. The documentary theory just doesn’t have enough authors to accommodate the need, so two of the stories must go to one author. The presupposition undergirding this approach is that no writer would include three such similar stories so close to each other, so they must come from different writers. Here the interpretation is exactly the opposite of Metcalfe’s approach.

What would we do with all the annunciation type-scenes the Bible produces? Are we to assume that divine annunciations of upcoming births to Sarah (Genesis 18:9–15), Rebekah (Genesis 25:19–25), Samson’s mother (Judges 13), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), and the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 4:8–17) are all written by the same mind? Even more complicated is the annunciation to Elisabeth (Luke 1:5–25). Elisabeth repeats the themes of Hannah’s song to make the connection more direct. Are we to conclude that Luke also wrote the books of Genesis, Samuel, Judges, and Kings?

Clearly, what we have in Metcalfe’s “literary” principle of textual relationship is an ideology posing as a method. In fact, if Metcalfe had read Alter and Sternberg, he simply could not have reached his conclusions.

Biblical criticism has recently been broadly affected by literary criticism. The old approaches to the text have largely given way to other readings. Narrative mirroring is so common in biblical literature that Robert Alter has given it the name of “type-scenes”:

The two most distinctively biblical uses of repeated action are when we are given two versions of the same event when the same event, with minor variations, occurs at different junctures of the narrative, usually involving different characters or sets of characters. . . . The recurrence of the same event—the sameness being definable as a fixed sequence of narrative motifs which, however, may be presented in a variety of ways and sometimes with ingenious inventions—is what I have

---

called "type-scene," and it constitutes a central organizing convention of biblical narrative. Here one has to watch for the minute and revelatory changes that a given type-scene undergoes as it passes from one character to another.\footnote{33}

Metcalf is attributing a stupidity to the writer Joseph Smith that some biblical critics have often attributed to the biblical writers. "The assumption is characteristic of biblical scholarship since the nineteenth century: the text is imagined to be driven by a compulsion to report bits and pieces of tradition, with scarcely any sense that the writer might be purposefully selecting, embedding, reshaping, and recontextualizing bits and pieces of tradition in his own artful narrative."\footnote{34} Other narrative theorists have followed Alter in criticizing this approach. "Repetition in general, in fact, is a feature of biblical narrative that the anachronistic and arrogantly ethnocentric reader easily qualifies as 'primitive,' a response that historical-critical scholarship tends to repeat, obscuring it under the gesture called 'separation of sources.'"\footnote{35}

What Metcalf simply cannot permit, for ideological reasons, is the possibility that the Book of Mormon has such repetitions in it because the reader is supposed to see them as repetitions, that the meaning of the similarities is part of the message. Because Metcalf adheres to such primitive "literary" principles, he attributes primitiveness to the text.

Not only do the two sources Metcalf cites for biblical narrative radically attack his idea of what a repetition means, but both of them also have long discussions undermining the distinction between fiction and history so necessary to that same ideology; Alter notes that "history is far more intimately related to fiction than we have been accustomed to assume."\footnote{36} Sternberg specifically addresses and refutes the position Metcalf depends upon. He devotes a long section entitled "Fiction and History" to what

\footnote{34}{Robert Alter, The World of Biblical Literature (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 18.}
\footnote{36}{Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, 24.}
he labels positivism. One could hardly choose more unfriendly sources to refer the reader to; there is a real danger that someone will actually take up the offer to read further.

I won't dwell here further on the new conceptions of textual-ity being advanced in real literary theory. Let me just note that Metcalfe's choice in characterizing the relationship between Book of Mormon doublets is not ideologically innocent. Metcalfe could have selected so many other ways to characterize the narrative. Why could he not see the text as an example of *inner-biblical exegesis*, a phrase popularized by Michael Fishbane? Why is it not one of intertextuality, of allusion, of influence, of a thousand other possibilities? Baxandall is referring to similar concepts in art, but notice his many ways of characterizing the text that Metcalfe neglects:

"Influence" is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient: it seems to reverse the active/passive relation which the historical actor experiences and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account. If one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than that Y did something to X. But in the consideration of good pictures and painters the second is always the more lively reality. It is very strange that a term with such an incongruous astral background has come to play such a role, because it is right against the real energy of the lexicon. If we think of Y rather than X as the agent, the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address, paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody, extract from, distort.

---

attend to, resist, simplify, reconstitute, elaborate on, develop, face up to, master, subvert, perpetuate, reduce, promote, respond to, transform, tackle...—everyone will be able to think of others. Most of these relations just cannot be stated the other way round—in terms of X acting on Y rather than Y acting on X. To think in terms of influence blunts thought by impoverishing the means of differentiation. Worse, it is shifty.38

In order to pass off his ideology, Metcalfe must first make the Book of Mormon seem a superficial text and the relationships it bears to itself and other texts superficial. Let me pose the problem: if the Book of Mormon is more sophisticated than those readers who refer to plagiarism or self-plagiarism, then one must abandon the approach in some measure. Even if you think Joseph Smith wrote the book you must explain its complexity, and then explain how Joseph Smith is a much more sophisticated reader than is Brent Metcalfe.

The Mask of Allusion

Whatever is profound loves masks. —Nietzsche

Ultimately, the incompetent Book of Mormon readings offered by revisionists must give way to some reasonable literary understanding of the text. But if your a priori assumption is that the text is superficial, your reading of the text will be superficial. The real test for revisionist readings will occur when revisionists begin to concede the sophistication of the text: can they simultaneously maintain its modern origin and its sophistication? I have serious doubts. What it will require is that the assumed author (in this case Joseph Smith) be an astonishingly prescient reader of the Old Testament. Let me provide one example.

Metcalfes spends a little time reading the Mosiah section of the book and explaining the relationship of the King Noah story to

---

other stories. But he does so superficially. Let me deepen the
analysis, bringing in the theoretical insights regarding biblical nar-
rative that have become so common over the past decade. The
book of Mosiah overflows with allusions and references to the
Israelite experience with judges and kings, ranging from the law
of the king in Deuteronomy 17 to 2 Kings. In particular, the
books of Judges, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings are constantly
on the minds of the writers and editors of Mosiah. The book of
Mosiah begs the reader to connect the Nephite experience with
kings with that of the Israelite experience. I can develop only a
few of those intertextual relationships in this article.

Abinadi condemns Noah and his people for their sins, upon
which Noah issues an arrest warrant. In language heavy with exo-
dus symbolism, Abinadi calls the people to repentance (Mosiah
Abinadi, that I and my people shall be judged of him, or who is
the Lord, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction”
(Mosiah 11:27). This is not just reminiscent of Pharaoh who says,
“Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice” (Exodus 5:2), but
also of the Israelite who challenges Moses’ right to lead: “Who
made thee a prince and a judge over us?” (Exodus 2:14) and
Moses’ response to the Lord: “Who am I, that I should go unto
Pharaoh?” (Exodus 3:11); Abinadi’s vocabulary doesn’t invoke
just the prophet-king confrontations from the Deuteronomistic
history but also that between Moses and Pharaoh.

The debate also arises over whom these people belong to,
reminiscent of the Lord’s command: “Let my people go”
(Exodus 5:1); this is the context for Pharaoh’s question, “Who is
the Lord?” The Lord and Noah struggle over whom these people
belong to: are they the Lord’s servants or Noah’s? Abinadi begins
by calling them “this people” (Mosiah 11:23), but after Noah
calls them “my people” (Mosiah 12:27, 28) Abinadi begins to
state assertively: “Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying—
Abinadi, go and prophesy unto this my people” (Mosiah 12:1), in
spite of the fact that the people assert that they belong to Noah,
not the Lord (Mosiah 12:13). The claim that the people are the
Lord’s continues throughout the Abinadi narrative.

When Abinadi returns, two years later, one small and seem-
ingly insignificant detail is dropped that performs allusive work
worth a battalion of footnotes in understanding this confrontation between prophet and king. In the same verse in which Abinadi asserts that the people are the Lord’s, not Noah’s, the passage reports that Abinadi comes back in disguise (Mosiah 12:1). The oddity has passed seemingly unnoticed. Since the arrest warrant has been out for an Abinadi on the lam for two years, he would have good reason to be in disguise. But why blow your disguise immediately by identifying yourself? “And it came to pass that after the space of two years that Abinadi came among them in disguise, that they knew him not, and began to prophesy among them, saying: Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying—Abinadi, go and prophesy unto this my people” (Mosiah 12:1).

True enough, if you assume that any puzzling feature is an indication of deficiency, a stupidity, and if you refuse to let the text speak in its otherness, then you would just conclude that the writer was nodding. What writer would, after all, have a character immediately blow his disguise (perhaps Abinadi needs the disguise only to get this far)?

Perhaps we ought to permit the text to be so advanced that the reader needs to do considerable work to catch up to its sophistication. Since the text claims to be a product of an ancient Israelite culture, we might look to the Bible to see some meaning in this puzzling passage. We might consider that a type-scene or a typological consciousness is at work and we might look for similar type-scenes.

A few stories (mostly in the Deuteronomistic history) repeat the story of conflict between a king and someone else (usually a prophet). Someone is in disguise, the disguise is made known, and God’s will is unexpectedly revealed through the act of unveiling the disguise. Because the story occurs a number of times in the work that scholars call the Deuteronomistic history, “we may suppose that a theological point is being made here.”

All of these stories of disguises have to do with kingship. The first story is about Saul’s use of the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28). Bereft of prophetic guidance and in military danger, Saul disguises (hapas) himself, asking the witch to raise Samuel’s spirit

40 Ibid., 56.
from the dead (this after persecuting witches and soothsayers during his reign, at Samuel’s direction). Samuel delivers a divine message to Saul from God, but a dire one. “His disguising himself had done him no good; the divine disfavour had reached its inevitable result in the death of Saul.”41 Saul then goes out and dies in battle.

First Kings 20 contains material from northern sources. One of the sons of the prophets asks a traveler to strike him. The prophet then covers his wound, thereby disguising (hapas) himself. “Along comes the king; the prophet manufactures a story about his loss of a hostage whom he had undertaken to keep. The king thinks to condemn him out of his own mouth, but at that point the prophet strips off his disguise and stands revealed as a prophet.”42 The prophet then condemns the king for letting his hostage—Benhadad, king of Damascus—go free. Lives will be lost over the king’s not finishing the job.

These two stories contain similarities besides the prophet-king-disguise nexus. “The disguise story ends in each case with the same warning: defeat of the people in battle, and death of the king.”43 This sounds more and more like the Abinadi-Noah story. But a difference between the two biblical stories is that in this second one it is the prophet who attempts the disguise, not the king: “Here the ‘servant of God’ does the disguising, and not in any kind of attempt to trick God but to ensure that his message would be conveyed unmistakably to the king. To disguise oneself is thus not automatically a matter for condemnation; it may be a way of forwarding the divine initiative.”44

In 1 Kings 22 the northern and southern kings attempt to determine whether or not to go to battle against a common foe. They consult four hundred prophets to discover God’s will and receive the go-ahead. But Micaiah (not on the Israelite king’s list of paid consultants and hostile to the king) prophesies a bad result. The king of Judah apparently isn’t very bright, for he is willing to be the decoy for the Israelite king. “The two kings go to war against Ramoth-Gilead, and the king of Israel says ‘I will

---

41 Ibid., 57.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 58.
disguise myself [hapas hithpael once again] and go into battle, but you [the king of Judah] wear your robes.' This seems a sensible precaution when we hear in the next verse that the Aramaeans are commanded to 'Fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel.' But as we discover, it did the king of Israel no good.”

The king is killed at the hands of an Aramaean archer. The disguise is ineffective.

Josiah is the favored king of the Deuteronomist. But he is viewed less favorably by the Chronicler. On his way to meet Pharaoh’s army, Josiah disguises himself (hapas) and is killed (2 Chronicles 35:20–24). “The theme is again of the purpose of the God of Israel being worked out through the people’s enemies.”

In the final episode Jeroboam’s wife disguises (sanâ instead of hapas) herself at the king’s request to consult the blind prophet about the fate of their sick son. Again, the disguise is followed by death, of the son (1 Kings 14) and later of the whole family of Jeroboam. “Relevant also is the unexpected way in which the disguise is shown to be ineffective. Ahijah is blind, so presumably the disguise would not in itself have made any difference; but he is given a direct word from God which tells him who his imminent visitor is, and thus both the limitations of his blindness and the trickery of the disguise are overcome.”

The Jeroboam narrative deserves more development. Jeroboam’s son is sick; Jeroboam sends his wife in disguise to the blind prophet Ahijah to discover Abijah’s fate. The blind prophet sees through the disguise and pronounces a curse on Jeroboam and his house. As soon as Jeroboam’s wife enters the threshold of her house, Abijah dies.

Several story elements stand out. Of course, Jeroboam was the first of the Northern Israelite kings, the breakaway kingdom (all Northern kings are viewed as illegitimate by the Deuteronomist, especially Jeroboam). In order to consolidate power and prevent his subjects from continuing to participate in southern religious festivals in Jerusalem, Jeroboam sets up two shrines—one at the northern end of his kingdom and one at the southern end—to

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 59.
47 Ibid.
prevent religious boundary crossings from lapsing over into political border violations: "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28). This wording is reminiscent of the Israelites’ words when Aaron made a gold bull calf to worship: "after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4). This would, of course, be a clear sign of fictional borrowing for a positivist such as Metcalfe who worships the empirical out near the meadow as much as the Israelites worshipped the bull calf in the bamot. So Jeroboam’s kingship is intricately wound up, in the writer’s eyes, with the prototypical instance of idolatry in Israelite tradition, a bad omen for his reign.

Aaron’s sons also appear to involve themselves in idolatry: “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord” (Leviticus 10:1–2). Aaron’s two sons are named Abihu and Nadab: Jeroboam’s two sons are named Abijah and Nadab—the same two names (Abijah and Abihu are versions of the same name meaning “Yahweh is father”): “In the Deuteronomistic history, Jeroboam’s sin in setting up the golden calves and offering incense before them results in the deaths of his sons Nadab and Abijah. In the Priestly story in Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu are struck down after offering their ‘strange fire’ to God. The parallel could hardly be clearer.”48 Biblical textuality works fundamentally and principally through such allusive connections to other biblical stories.

Jeroboam’s son who dies when his wife returns from the prophet is Abijah. Just a few verses later, we discover that Jeroboam’s son Nadab succeeds his father as king (1 Kings 14:20). This Nadab dies horribly, slain and overthrown by Baasha, and the entire house of Jeroboam is destroyed just two years into

his reign. Why does this happen? "Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation whereby he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger" (1 Kings 15:30). Aberbach and Smolar find thirteen parallels between Jeroboam and Aaron: "The most decisive evidence of the close connection between Aaron and Jeroboam is the fact that the two eldest sons of Aaron—Nadab and Abihu—and the two recorded sons of Jeroboam—Nadab and Abijah—bear virtually identical names. It is also remarkable that both the two eldest sons of Aaron and the two sons of Jeroboam die in the prime of their life."49 Jeroboam's construction of the gold bull idols is the provocation—could there be a more clear characterization of Jeroboam as a renegade king and idolator than to compare him with Aaron? So layers of allusion are involved, although it is only the first two that Damrosch mentions that I am interested in at the moment:

Four distinct layers of history are folded into the ritual order by the story of the offering of the strange fire by Nadab and Abihu. First, the complexity of the historical moment at Sinai is encapsulated, as the brothers in effect repeat the golden calf episode and their father is brought to face the consequences of his sin. Aaron's making of the golden calf is now seen as stemming from his moral weakness in the face of the people's demand for a tangible divinity, one that would serve to prop up their own spiritual weakness. Second, the proleptic reference to the history of Jeroboam brings the action forward into the time of the monarchy, strengthening the association between priest and king already implicit in the regal paraphernalia given to Aaron as high priest (Exodus 28). In contrast to the weakness behind Aaron's misdeed, Jeroboam's making of the calves is an act of cynical power politics, as he tries to keep the people from returning to worship in

Jerusalem, where he fears that they will end up renewing their allegiance to the Davidic dynasty.\textsuperscript{50}

Expertly, the writer makes Jeroboam’s sins invoke the idolatry by Aaron and his sons. This is how biblical characterization operates—by allusion, by invocation, by indirection. Aberbach and Smolar raise the possibility that Metcalfe fixes his monomania on the idea that one text has been manipulated to fit the pattern established by the other narrative; but they also hold out another possibility: Jeroboam saw himself as a reviver of an ancient religious practice and acted with a typological consciousness: “Jeroboam, who like all reformers did not regard himself as an innovator but as a reviver of an ancient cult first introduced by Aaron, imitated the originator of the Israelite priesthood in every possible respect, and even went to the length of naming two of his sons, Nadab and Abijah, after Aaron’s two eldest sons.”\textsuperscript{51}

While Jeroboam’s wife is asking the prophet the fate of the child, Ahijah declares in the Lord’s name that Jeroboam “hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images to provoke me to anger” (1 Kings 14:9). Just as Jeroboam is condemned to die, Ahijah pronounces a simile curse on him similar to that pronounced by Abinadi on Noah: “The Lord shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now. For the Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the Lord to anger” (1 Kings 14:14–15). King Noah, too, is compared to a plant uprooted by the Lord’s justice, his people driven and exiled by the Lord’s decree: “He saith that thou shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot. And again, he said thou shalt be as the blossoms of a thistle, which, when it is fully ripe, if the wind bloweth, it is driven forth upon the face of the land” (Mosiah 12:11–12). Strong connections are found between Noah and

\textsuperscript{50} Damrosch, The Narrative Covenant, 277.

\textsuperscript{51} Aberbach and Smolar, “Aaron, Jeroboam, and the Golden Calves,” 135; cf. 140.
Jeroboam, but here the Book of Mormon is just being biblical because equally strong allusive connections exist between Jeroboam and Aaron.

The Northern Israelites are to be punished for Jeroboam’s sins by being driven into exile and slavery. Abinadi pronounces similar punishment on the people of Noah (Mosiah 12:2). Abinadi’s punishment depicts a people “driven by men, [who] shall be slain; and the vultures of the air and the dogs, yea, and the wild beasts shall devour their flesh” (Mosiah 12:2). I will shortly develop this punishment theme more completely. But the direct parallels between Jeroboam and Noah are important to establish. Ahijah declares to Jeroboam’s wife that “him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the Lord hath spoken it” (1 Kings 14:11).

Positivist analysis would have bountiful material here to call plagiarized. The Jeroboam narrative invokes the story of Aaron’s fabrication of the bull idol, Aaron’s idolatry, and the death of Aaron’s sons. Abinadi alludes to this story, already deeply imbedded in predecession, by invoking the punishment pronounced on Jeroboam (Mosiah 12:2; 1 Kings 14:11), the sin of idolatry (Mosiah 11:6–7; 1 Kings 12:28–30), and Noah’s—like Jeroboam’s—instigation of his people to sin (Mosiah 11:2; 29:18; 1 Kings 12:30). Noah’s dismissal of the priests appointed by his father and his appointment of the most worthless people in their stead (Mosiah 11:5–6) is similar to Jeroboam’s action (1 Kings 12:31; 13:33; 2 Chronicles 13:9), and a similar simile curse is pronounced on both (Mosiah 12:10–12; 1 Kings 14:15). The Noah, Jeroboam, and Aaron stories are intertwined in ways too complicated to be done justice by a simplistic positivist claim that similarity means plagiarism. Metcalfe sees what he considers significant parallels between Noah and Riplakish. But the Noah narrative is sufficiently long that a reader must pick and choose what parallels are significant in comparison to another king. Indeed, another of Metcalfe’s fifteen sources indicates that ideology is particularly strong in determining what narratives are parallel to each other: Barbara Smith asks “who is responsible for a version
being a version?" Ideological, personal, and disciplinary assumptions go into the construction of "versions." But such discussion of versions doesn’t take into account the “human purposes, perceptions, actions, or interactions.” Because versionness or similarity isn’t given in the text, the reader must bring other considerations into account to determine what story is a version of another story. “Among any array of narratives—tales or tellings—in the universe, there is an unlimited number of potentially perceptible relations... Whenever these potentially perceptible relations become actually perceived, it is by virtue of some set of interests on the part of the perceiver.” Metcalfe’s criteria of significance are ideological, as are mine. I think the parallels between Jeroboam and Noah are more noteworthy (and I’ll throw Ahab in for good measure):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jeroboam</th>
<th>Ahab</th>
<th>Noah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Disguise narratives</td>
<td>1 Kg. 14</td>
<td>1 Kg. 12:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Idolatry</td>
<td>1 Kg. 12:28–30, 1 Kg. 14:9–11</td>
<td>1 Kg. 16:31–33, 1 Kg. 21:25–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sons die because of wickedness</td>
<td>1 Kg. 14, 1 Kg. 15</td>
<td>2 Kg. 10:1–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. People are scattered</td>
<td>1 Kg. 14:14–15, 2 Kg. 17:22–23</td>
<td>Mos. 12:11–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Plant simile</td>
<td>1 Kg. 14:14–15</td>
<td>Mos. 12:11–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Eaten by dogs and fowls</td>
<td>1 Kg. 14:10–11</td>
<td>1 Kg. 21:19, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Caused the people to sin</td>
<td>1 Kg. 12:30, 1 Kg. 14:16, 2 Kg. 17:21</td>
<td>1 Kg. 19:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Dismissal of priests and appoint-ment of new ones</td>
<td>1 Kg. 12:31, 1 Kg. 13:33, 2 Chr. 13:9, 2 Chr. 11:14–15</td>
<td>Mos. 11:5–6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53 Ibid., 217–18.
The allusive character of these stories is so much a part of the meaning that any reading failing to take the allusions into account can’t be considered adequate.

The common elements to the kingily disguise type-scenes are many: (1) the king is ultimately the punished/victim (Saul; two unnamed kings—although the two stories are almost certainly about Ahab as Chronicles demonstrates; Josiah; Jeroboam and his successor-son); (2) all the stories place limits on the king. God is in charge and will punish the kings: “The accounts in the Deuteronomistic History have in common the fact that it is an unacceptable line of kingship which is condemned in these disguise stories. In 1 Kings that is obvious enough; all three of the rulers there referred to are rulers of the northern kingdom, and that very fact is itself enough to ensure condemnation.”54 Another element (3) is that the disguise can never be taken quite seriously as a disguise—it doesn’t work or is immediately dropped. “It seems that a point of fundamental theological significance is being made by the way in which this theme of disguising oneself is treated. Nothing is hidden from God’s sight; he is presented as controlling the situation, often, as we have seen, in unexpected ways.”55

---

54 Coggins, “On Kings and Disguises,” 60.
55 Ibid., 61. Coggins refers to the story of Jacob’s disguise in Genesis 27. He claims that this disguise story is much different in that the disguise is
Abinadi’s disguise is not necessarily a real effort at disguise but an allusive invocation of monarchical commentary from the Deuteronomist. As Ahijah proclaims simile curses against Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:15), Abinadi says that “the life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace” (Mosiah 12:3). When the people capture Abinadi and take him before the king, the report (in typically Hebrew poetic fashion) expands the simile curse into three, whether because the first time Abinadi said it the text underreports or the people themselves are expanding the curse: “And he also prophesied evil concerning thy life, and saith that thy life shall be as a garment in a furnace of fire. And again, he saith that thou shalt be as a stalk, even as a dry stalk of the field, which is run over by the beasts and trodden under foot. And again, he saith thou shalt be as the blossom of a thistle, when it is fully ripe, if the wind bloweth, it is driven forth upon the face of the land” (Mosiah 12:10–12).

Notice the economy in just mentioning that Abinadi came in disguise. Without overtly invoking them, using the allusive style so common in biblical writers in which one narrative is used to provide subtle commentary on another, the narrative gathers these other stories of kings, prophets, and disguises to foreshadow Noah’s end. The other kings or dynasties in the disguise type-scenes meet with brutal deaths, and the failure of the dynasty becomes apparent: not only does Saul die in battle the next day, but his dynasty is cut short. Ahab is surely the king involved in 1 Kings 20 and he and his seventy sons are slain (2 Kings 10); another narrative has Ahab dying in battle (1 Kings 22). Josiah dies in battle, and Jeroboam’s son dies along with the king’s hope for a dynasty. It isn’t hard to guess what will happen to Noah: he will die in battle (actually brutally killed by his own subjects) and, although his son Limhi does become king for a little while, the dynasty ends when the people are absorbed in the larger group of Nephites.

The disguise theme is particularly apt for the Abinadi-Noah story because the blindness and deception in stories of Israelite and Judahite kings comment on the blindness of the Israelite peo-

---

both good and effective, an element of the working out of God’s plan, not an attempt to avoid God’s power. There is also no king in Jacob’s story.
ple and their kings who try to sever their own power from the God who granted that power (the portrayal of Josiah in a disguise type-scene is an exception). Particularly when Abinadi, in condemning Noah’s court, invokes the suffering servant passage from Isaiah: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him” (Mosiah 14:3). The following narrative also draws on the theme of hiding, for it is a character named Alma who hides in the wilderness, getting no rest from a king named Noah. Whoever wrote the Book of Mormon text seems have had a sharp eye for detail and is far beyond any contemporary readers in subtlety and knowledge of the Bible.

Of course the Abinadi-Noah confrontation has many more allusive connections with the stories of kings and prophets in the Deuteronomistic history; I can’t illuminate all of them here. But also notice that the simile curse advanced by Abinadi has to do with Noah’s garments: Noah’s life will be as a garment in the furnace.

Six biblical king/prophet narratives demonstrate that even kings are obligated to obey the law. In many, the garment is rent to indicate symbolically that the kingdom is taken from the unworthy king: (1) Saul disobeys God in conquering the Amalekites so when Saul tears Samuel’s garment the prophet utters a simile curse against the king (1 Samuel 15:28; David also cuts or tears Saul’s garment, 1 Samuel 24:3–5), (2) David is indicted by Nathan in the ewe parable (the story has no symbolic tearing/cutting), (3) Solomon follows other gods and consequently will have the kingdom torn from his son (1 Kings 11:11–12), whereupon Ahijah catches Solomon’s rival, Jeroboam, by the garment and tears it into twelve pieces—giving ten to Jeroboam, symbolizing the ten tribes that will follow Jeroboam and the two that will follow Rehoboam (1 Kings 11:28–31), (4) Ahijah predicts that the kingdom will be rent from Jeroboam because of his sins (1 Kings 14:14), (5) Elijah prophesies that Ahab will be cut off (1 Kings 21:21), and (6) when Josiah hears of the discovery of the book of the law, he tears his own garment because his people have not been keeping the law (2 Kings 22:19). These stories fol-
low a pattern to demonstrate that the king must also obey the law:56

1. The king’s crimes are recounted
2. The prophet indicts the king for his crimes
3. The king repents (in the Jeroboam story remorse does not occur)
4. God determines a punishment to be imposed in the next generation.

The Noah narrative follows this pattern (he, like Ahab, doesn’t repent—although he attempts repentance, but his priests talk him out of releasing Abinadai).

1. Noah’s crimes are recounted (Mosiah 11:1–15)
2. The prophet indicts the king for his crimes (Mosiah 11:20–28; 12:1–13:35)
3. The king repents, if only briefly and self-interestedly (Mosiah 17:11–12)

Noah’s life is to be valued as a garment in a fire (Mosiah 12:3). Perhaps in isolation, this analysis stretches Noah’s garment in the fire too far in alluding to these stories of garments being cut (indicating the covenant that was cut with the kings now being torn). But taken with the preponderance of allusions to the interrogation of kingship in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, we ought to give some weight to the notion that Noah’s garment is an invocation of these earlier kings’ garments.

After all, the other elements of punishment pronounced on Noah and his people also invoke the kings’ narratives: “Thus saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that this generation, because of their iniquities, shall be brought into bondage, and shall be smitten on the cheek; yea, and shall be driven by men, and shall be slain; and the vultures of the air, and the dogs, yea, and the wild beasts shall devour their flesh” (Mosiah 12:2). You know my exegetical

pattern by now: look to instances in the Bible where a king and his people are judged sufficiently wicked to have dogs and fowl lick their blood and eat their flesh.

Only the most wicked monarchical characters deserve this punishment. Elijah prophesies that Jezebel will be eaten by dogs (1 Kings 21:23), and the text describes the fulfillment (2 Kings 9:8–10). Likewise, the punishment is foretold of Ahab (1 Kings 21:19, 24) and is fulfilled (1 Kings 22:37–38). The same prediction is made of Jeroboam and his house (1 Kings 14:10–11). Baasha is explicitly compared to Jeroboam and the same punishment is prescribed for Baasha and his house (1 Kings 16:1–4). The king-figure who is a stand-in for king Saul, Nabal, has a similar imprecation pronounced against him by David (1 Samuel 25:22, 34), which is also notable because Nabal is from the house of Caleb; the word plays throughout the chapter on Caleb and keleb, “dog,” are noteworthy. The reader must connect Noah to the wicked kings of northern Israel. By invoking extensive and sophisticated allusions to the book of Kings, the text successfully characterizes Noah and foreshadows his end.

But the allusions don’t just stop there. Abinadi’s judgment doesn’t just pertain to Noah, but to all his people. The punishment of having dogs and fowls lick the blood and eat the flesh applies not only to kings and their dynasties but their subjects also. Jeremiah foretells the punishment for Judah. They will be exiled, an exile that specifically invokes the figures of Moses and Samuel (Jeremiah 15:1). The punishment for neglecting God’s law is famine, captivity, and the sword: “I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy” (Jeremiah 15:3). All of this is invoked because of the wicked reign of a single king of Judah: Manasseh (Jeremiah 15:4). Deuteronomy 28:26 likewise prophesies a similar end in exile if the Israelites disobey the law.

The punishment oracles of Abinadi are braided with references to the Deuteronomistic history and any adequate reading must take into account the radically intertextual character of the text.
Thin Description, Thin Theorizing

Metcalf’s reading of the Book of Mormon is superficial because the theoretical assumptions he brings to the reading process are so impoverished. Metcalfe’s reading method is to assume that the text will yield to a superficial reading, and so his expectations are rewarded.

Now I don’t see how you can possibly explain the complex in terms of the simple without having your very success used as a charge against you. When you get through, all that your opponent need say is: “But you have explained the complex in terms of the simple—and the simple is precisely what the complex is not.”\(^5^7\)

That the Book of Mormon is simple is a presupposition that Metcalfe uncritically accepts. Can one demonstrate that the text is simple? I would be interested to see that. It is fairly easy to demonstrate that particular readings of a text are reductive and simplistic.

Since he has failed to demonstrate any sustained and accurate knowledge of contemporary literary, narrative, and biblical theory, I would be loath to accept either Metcalfe’s diagnosis or treatment. I prefer doctors who have been to medical school.

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992. viii + 300 pp., with subject and scripture indexes. $11.95.

Reviewed by Mack C. Stirling

This book contains seventeen papers from the Seventh Annual Book of Mormon Symposium sponsored by the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University. The authors’ backgrounds include Brigham Young University religious education faculty (8), other BYU faculty (4), other Church Educational System faculty (3), an attorney, a dentist, and a General Authority.

Elder Russell M. Nelson begins the volume with a brief analysis of each of ten names, responsibilities, or aspects of the mission of Jesus Christ. These include Christ’s roles as creator, redeemer, and judge of all mankind and are taken from the fifty-seven subheadings listed under “Jesus Christ” in the Topical Guide. Elder Nelson draws several comparisons between his former occupation as a cardiothoracic surgeon and his current calling as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and closes with his testimony.

Several of the authors treat those aspects of individual salvation emphasized in the book of Helaman. W. Ralph Pew investigates the principle of sanctification, which he defines as “a life-long process of refinement whereby the naturally occurring tendencies of mortality are preferentially purged from our soul through the atoning blood of Christ and by our voluntarily yielding our agency to God” (p. 207). Twice subsequently (p. 208) he refers to the carnal proclivities of mortality as a consequence of the fall that must be removed by sanctification. He does not consider the possibility that some of the deficiencies in our souls, such as pride, envy, or the tendency to anger, may result
from our development (or lack thereof) in the premortal existence. Pew's paper contains appropriate comparisons between sanctification and the process of refining metals, and likewise between Mosaic rituals and sanctification. The role and power of the Holy Ghost in sanctification are well described. A major strength of the article lies in its description of the relationships between the sacrament and sanctification, and the temple and sanctification.

Pew writes that part of his objective is to provide us with the ability to apply doctrinal concepts to the practical process of sanctification. However, his doctrinal analysis is not extensive. Typical of many current Latter-day Saint writers on this topic, Pew neither attempts to describe the relationship between justification and sanctification nor to distinguish between them; indeed, he merges these two concepts into one (p. 209). He mentions the doctrines of grace and spiritual rebirth briefly, but the paper could have been strengthened considerably had he attempted more extensive definitions of these principles and a detailed investigation of their relationships to sanctification.

In a related article, Brett P. Thomas discusses the function of hearing and remembering the word of God in personal conversion and repentance, using the story of the conversion of their Lamanite jailers by Nephi and Lehi (Helaman 5:20–6:5) as his primary text. Thomas skillfully uses scripture and pertinent quotations from modern prophets to describe the nature and characteristics of the word and voice of God, as well as the effect of the word of God on mankind, both the righteous and the unrighteous. The paper is well written and well worth reading for its significant insights into personal sanctification, the role of the veil, and the mechanism by which giving heed to the voice and word of God will eventually lead us to a full capability to comprehend and live the truth.

Robert L. Millet focuses on the idea of building on the rock of our Redeemer (Helaman 5:12). Millet's considerable gifts for explicating gospel principles are well demonstrated in his paper. He describes how Jesus Christ is the Father in a very real sense,
namely that of being the father of eternal life for those who are born again by accepting the gospel. He makes important observations about the nature and mechanism of Christ’s atonement and about the power of the word of God to protect us from temptation and unsound doctrine and lead us back to God. Consistent with his previous writings, Millet makes some very profound comments regarding the power and necessity of grace in our salvation, placing the interaction of our efforts and God’s grace in good perspective.

I feel that Millet’s article is extremely worthwhile, but I was somewhat troubled by two of his comments. In mentioning these, I do not wish to detract from the value of his excellent paper, but rather to provoke further thought and comment. First, I found unconvincing Millet’s speculation that Lucifer certainly would not have included mention of coercion or denied agency as part of his public proposal in the War in Heaven (p. 20). It seems quite possible to me that Lucifer could have mentioned the mechanism (coercion-violation of agency) by which he proposed to guarantee salvation for all when he publicly proposed his alternative to God’s plan. Second, Millet appropriately urges us to heed, accept, and respect our church leaders, but then he makes the extreme statement that “there is no power to be found in Christ independent of his constituted priesthood authorities” (p. 31). Taken at face value (and admittedly out of context) this would mean, among other things, that devout non-Mormon Christians could never receive any benefit from prayer. I doubt Millet intended this. In any case, it is particularly ironic that the person Millet quotes most in his chapter (more than any prophet or priesthood authority) is the non-Mormon writer C. S. Lewis.

Andrew C. Skinner contributes an interesting paper on the life of Nephi2, concentrating on the marvelous revelations he received as recorded in Helaman 10. Although the phrase “calling and election made sure” does not occur in the Book of Mormon, the principle certainly does; and Skinner makes a compelling case that Nephi2 had this ultimate experience with God. Skinner also demonstrates how the examples of the unconditional promise of

---

2 See Robert L. Millet, By Grace Are We Saved (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989).
eternal life of the Book of Mormon parallel the pattern of covenant making in the Old Testament. These observations, along with the perspectives shed on the Second Comforter, personal revelation, and the pursuit of the promise of exaltation, make this article a valuable addition to the literature on these topics. Skinner does reach one conclusion which I question, and which should ideally have been pursued further, namely, that to have been foreordained to eternal life would have been the greatest appointment or calling possible in the premortal existence (p. 116). This raises the question of how many of the premortal spirits were foreordained to eternal life. If all were, it doesn’t make sense to label it as the greatest calling in the premortal existence. If fewer than all were, what would be the implications for those not so foreordained? Do they have any possibility of gaining eternal life?

Monte S. Nyman examines the role of the book of Helaman in restoring plain and precious parts that have been lost from the gospel. He is successful in generating a surprisingly long list of examples in which the book of Helaman confirms the reality of various Old Testament people and events. He is less successful with his several quotations from The Interpreter’s Bible, which he uses as examples of errant Christian thought potentially corrected by the Book of Mormon. For example, he correctly quotes The Interpreter’s Bible 1:562 as saying that the Tower of Babel story is a naive answer to the origin of language differences and that differences of language developed over long periods of time as various groups of the human race went through the separate phases of their existence (p. 149). However, the text from Helaman (6:28) that he quotes to correct this proposed misconception says nothing about language at all, although it does refer to the Tower of Babel. Nyman is least successful in the concluding section, entitled “New Testament Principles Taught in the Old Testament.” Since the book we call the Old Testament certainly did not exist—as it is currently constituted—at the time of Helaman, this section would have been more appropriately entitled “Gospel Principles Taught in Old Testament Times.” Here, Nyman falters when he proposes that the original source for similar phrases in Helaman and the Sermon on the Mount, such as “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” was the brass plates (p. 159). Why couldn’t the book of
Helaman have been the first written record of such phrases? Nyman presents no evidence to the contrary.

Douglas Brinley writes on the relationship between the land of America and the various civilizations which have lived on it. He provides a well-organized summary of each of the peoples, their relationships to the commandments of God, and their eventual apostasy and destruction. He develops an insightful description of the stages in the development of apostasy in society. His major theme is that when the majority of the people chooses evil over good, destruction awaits (Mosiah 29:27; Helaman 5:2). Powerful and pertinent correlations are drawn between this concept and prophetic counsel given by President Benson to our modern society.

Richard O. Cowan describes the interrelationships between the Nephites and the Lamanites, showing that the boundaries between the two groups were not rigid, that those called Lamanites were at times more righteous than those called Nephites, and that both groups merged at the coming of Christ to the Americas, only to separate later based on righteousness versus wickedness rather than on genealogy. This paper is a useful summary of some important historical features of the Book of Mormon, which should help to correct a number of misconceptions commonly held about the Lamanites by students of the Book of Mormon. However, Cowan’s purpose in writing that “this inaccurate perception [of the Lamanites as a cursed and loathsome people] may actually discourage some Latter-day Saints from wanting to share the Book of Mormon with Lamanites today” (p. 251), seems a bit overstated. I doubt this is actually a significant problem in the Church. I also wondered about Cowan’s assertion that by A.D. 367 “the mark of the dark skin had not yet returned to the wicked” (p. 260), based on the statement in Mormon 5:15 that “this people [the Lamanites] shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond description of that which ever hath been amongst us.” This falls short of actually saying that the Lamanites had no dark skin by the time of Mormon. Rodney Turner’s conclusion that “there is no explicit refer-
ence to [the timing of] the restoration of the dark skin in the Book of Mormon” seems more judicious.

In a relatively brief paper, Ronald D. Anderson examines Helaman and 3 Nephi for “leitwörter,” which he defines as repeated thematic keywords that serve to highlight the meaning of a text. He demonstrates that remember occurs 13 times in Helaman 5:6–12 and that the root word remember occurs over 240 times in the Book of Mormon. However, only a minimal analysis is offered of the mechanism whereby repetition of this word enhances an understanding of the Book of Mormon, although an apposite quote from President Kimball on the significance of the word remember is included. Even more briefly, Anderson notes the repetition of the words or phrases pondering, O Lord, saith the Lord, I, and cursed, as well as other words in several texts from Helaman and 3 Nephi. Although these observations of instances of simple repetition are not without value, even more valuable would have been a deeper investigation of the texts involved and an attempt to correlate the use of a thematic word by one author with the use of the same word by a different author to enhance interpretation of both texts.

R. Wayne Shute and Wayne E. Brickey assert that perplexity is an essential precursor to all real learning (p. 177). Their thesis is that prophets naturally perplex us because they speak from a perspective different from ours, and that this perplexity can, in turn, lead either to mind-enlarging, soul-saving inquiry, or to self-sufficient, soul-jeopardizing indifference or rebellion (pp. 180, 189). The prophetic missions of Nephi, and Samuel the Lamanite are used very convincingly to illustrate these principles. In addition, the authors point out most appropriately that the idea of a suffering and slain Redeemer is perplexing to the natural man, even though this reality is the most important truth to be learned in our mortal existence. This paper is a very worthwhile contribution and should serve, at the very least, to remind us that if we do not occasionally experience confusion and perplexity in our religion, we have ceased to learn.

---

The apostasy and destruction which came upon the Nephites prior to Christ’s visit to them have long been used in the Church as types of the wickedness and destruction to come upon our world prior to the Second Coming. Not surprisingly, four different chapters treat this theme. John L. Fowles traces briefly the decline of the Nephites, appropriately relating this decline to rejection of the word of God. He correlates the word of God with the covenants of God and reminds us of the power of the word to lead people to do that which is just. Although Fowles does not break new ground in this paper, he does close with some well-stated admonitions about the importance of being able to study the scriptures for ourselves, that we might become more empowered to receive the word of God.

Chauncey C. Riddle structures an analysis of the events in 3 Nephi 6 and 7 and their latter-day parallels around his observation that the Lord has specifically designated both the meridian of times and the last days as “days of wickedness and vengeance” (Moses 7:46, 60; p. 191). Riddle moves beyond the simple listing of obvious parallels between Book of Mormon times and our own times to consider insightfully how the wickedness and vengeance of the last days fit into the purposes of God, both for the righteous as well as the wicked. He offers a profound analysis of the relationship between passing through the spiritual fires of wickedness and temptation and passing through the actual fires of destruction prior to the Second Coming. One of his final statements, “being in hell is a blessing which makes possible the greater blessing of inheriting glory afterwards” (p. 205), succinctly solves a dilemma confronting many modern Christians, the question of how a perfectly loving God can consign people to unpurposeful suffering in hell.\(^4\) This paper represents another valuable contribution by the author to Latter-day Saint literature.

Gerald Hansen, Jr., describes the book of Helaman as a frightful warning used by Mormon to teach us “to avoid wickedness that could lead to our destruction” (p. 163). Hansen maintains that “the sins of the great and spacious building—pride and seeking wealth—are more perilous than the sins implied by the

mists of darkness—immorality and drunkenness—because they are not as obvious” (p. 166). He explores the presence of crime, pseudo-patriotism, and injustice in Nephite society and in ours, showing that we are prone to define righteousness in our own terms rather than God’s (p. 166), that we are easily seduced to participate in improper activities just to make money (pp. 169–70), and that we tend to silence divergent voices, thereby eliminating genuine discussion and inhibiting our ability to correct problems (p. 172). This paper is well written, full of important insights and observations, and worth consideration by all Latter-day Saints.

Thomas W. Mackay examines Helaman 12 and other appropriate texts to develop a description of Mormon’s philosophy of history. His conclusion, which I find compelling, is that Mormon had a providential view of history wherein “the events of human history demonstrated God’s justice and his ultimate control of the affairs of men” (p. 137). Mackay observes many interesting aspects of Mormon’s historical writing, such as his focus on spiritual values rather than measurable material achievements (p. 136), his view of history as composed of alternating cycles of righteousness and wickedness (p. 137), and his aversion to all offensive warfare (p. 141). He emphasizes that the essential difference between Mormon as a prophet-historian and modern secular historians is the issue of revelation—the ability to discern the presence of God’s hand in human history. Mackay’s paper is an important and valuable contribution to a growing body of literature on Mormon’s function as an editor.5 All of these publications illustrate the astonishing complexity of the Book of Mormon and the corollary to that complexity, the low probability from a purely logical perspective that Joseph Smith was the original source for the book.

Victor L. Ludlow investigates the bonds created between members of secret combinations as examples of covenants patterned after covenants between God and man. He notes that the word covenant is used fifteen times in Helaman through 3 Nephi

---

8 to refer to the vows between the wicked in secret combinations. Ludlow is very insightful in demonstrating effectively that these covenants among the wicked follow the suzerain-vassal treaty pattern of the ancient Near East (historical background, stipulations, blessings and curses, witnesses, and some form of remembrance or record) which is characteristic of many of the covenants from God recorded in scripture. I accept Ludlow’s thesis that studying the pattern of secret combinations in their original and subsequent forms can “provide insights for us today” (p. 266), but find a little paradoxical later comments such as “harboring too much time, talk, and energy on evil doings may lead to evil doings” (p. 275). The probability of “evil doings” is better correlated with one’s intent in studying evil rather than the depth of one’s analysis thereof.

Ludlow structures his paper somewhat arbitrarily by dividing the verses containing the fifteen references to covenants among the wicked into eight separate texts, each text then undergoing individual analysis. For each text, a chart is generated listing the key elements and the covenant features found in each. This results in eight charts, most with two parts, and in a great deal of redundancy from one chart to another, unnecessarily cluttering the paper and making absorption of the message rather tedious. It is difficult to see the forest because of the trees. For example, Helaman 6:21–30 is separated into three texts with three overlapping analyses; elegance and insight would have been better served with a unified analysis. In addition, Ludlow’s analysis of 3 Nephi 7:11 (pp. 278–79) is flawed. This verse, which mentions the secret covenants of the wicked only in passing, describes rather the efforts of the more mainstream Nephites to oppose secret covenant combinations. Characteristics of these more mainstream Nephites are inappropriately used by Ludlow to fill out one of his eight charts about the secret covenants of the wicked.

Ludlow does draw a number of good comparisons between the evils of secret combinations in the Book of Mormon and evil in our modern world, appropriately emphasizing that even members of the Church can support the work of evil secret combinations to the degree that they remain in sin. He does not attempt to identify specific secret combinations in our time, a wise decision.
Allen J. Christenson examines social, economic, and political conditions described in Helaman and 3 Nephi just prior to the coming of Christ. He notes the remarkable increase in trade, wealth, and class distinction described in the Book of Mormon during this time period. Christenson then surveys some of the archaeological evidence (largely from the Mayan city Kaminaljuyu) which confirms just such an expansion in wealth, commerce, and social distinction in Mesoamerica between approximately 100 B.C. and A.D. 50, using the major current secondary sources. This interesting observation and its correlation are not new, having been previously described by John L. Sorenson. Sorenson, however, is more adept at integrating the Book of Mormon into ancient Mesoamerica, although Christenson does provide some information about Cerros not found in Sorenson’s book, supporting the thesis that the Book of Mormon actually does describe conditions present in ancient Mesoamerica.

Christenson is at times less cautious than I would prefer in using the Book of Mormon to explain Mesoamerican archaeological findings. For example, in the section entitled “Rise of Secret Societies,” he uses two paragraphs to describe Monte Alban, and then three paragraphs to describe the secret society of Gadianton. Christenson does not directly label Monte Alban as a Gadianton city, but it is clear that he wishes the reader to see it as such. Although Monte Alban was clearly involved in military expansion during the time in question, it seems premature and injudicious to correlate it directly to a Gadianton stronghold. The current archaeological findings could undoubtedly be explained in other ways. I must also admit to being perplexed after reading in Christenson’s paper a passage referring to Linda Schele and David Friedel’s A Forest of Kings: “As new kingdoms grew and proliferated, free territories either joined the growing network of economically interconnected states or were swallowed up by it” (p. 232).

---

8 Referring to Linda Schele and David Friedel, A Forest of Kings (New York: Williams, Morrow, 1990), 59-60.
is found in their *A Forest of Kings*: “Political coherence and integration characterized life within the dominion of a King, but in the borderlands between the kingdoms, the opportunity must have existed for adventurous people to maintain independent chiefdoms, or even for whole villages of unallied farmers to exist.”

Although Christenson may be correct in his ideas, I feel that this inconsistency illustrates the general principle that great care should be exercised when one is faced with the temptation to pick and choose isolated conclusions from Mesoamerican archaeologists that appear to confirm one’s current interpretation of Book of Mormon history.

Christenson’s paper is valuable in reminding us of the remarkable correlation between the economic and social conditions described in general terms in the Book of Mormon in the first century B.C., and the current consensus of archaeologists regarding economic expansion and social stratification in Mesoamerica at about the same time. It is also especially worthwhile in reminding us that many of the problems in Nephite society resulted from rejection of their prophets’ words concerning the dangers of the pursuit of wealth and material well-being, with the obvious application to our society.

*The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word* is typical of the previous yearly monographs on portions of the Book of Mormon published by the BYU Religious Studies Center. Many of the contributions have the substance and depth of a good-to-excellent Sunday School Gospel Doctrine lesson. Others show evidence of more profound insight, deeper analysis, or more extensive scholarly research. I believe most Latter-day Saints would find this book a worthwhile addition to their libraries, as with other volumes in the series. However, it must not be forgotten that the Church still awaits an in-depth, scholarly but faithful commentary on the Book of Mormon. Such a publication would aid immeasurably in permitting us to plumb the profound truths of the book.

---

9 Ibid., 60.

“Bird Island” Revisited, or the Book of Mormon through Pyramidal Kabbalistic Glasses

Reviewed by John Gee

In this book Joe Sampson sets forth a novel thesis that no one else is likely ever to have come up with. Joe Sampson thinks that the Book of Mormon is a sealed book that must be unlocked with the kabbalistic keys of the tree of the Sephiroth (pp. 87–104) and the so-called “Alphabet and Grammar” from the Kirtland Egyptian Papers (pp. 117–50, 161–279). He does this by proceeding on the dubious assumption that if the revelations restored through Joseph Smith “did not contain the Kabbalistic codes then they could be brought into question as not being authentic restored ancient material” (p. 25). Since kabbalah was a system of scriptural exegesis developed by rabbis “in Provence sometime between [A.D.] 1150 and 1200 but no earlier,”¹ its apparent absence from the Book of Mormon has not bothered either critic or defender before. Kabbalah is a system of interpretation and not of writing and thus any text can be interpreted kabbalistically—though, to my knowledge, no one else has previously found a kabbalistic interpretation of the Book of Mormon profitable. This

is not to say that it might not be profitable, but Sampson says so many irrational things that it is difficult to take either his book or his approach seriously. It is somewhere between 1066 and All That\(^2\) and the Zohar. The first part of this review will gather together many of the elements that would have made a hilarious spoof on the order of Hugh Nibley’s “Bird Island”; the last part will deal with the two serious issues of Sampson’s thesis, the kabbalistic interpretation of scripture and the Kirtland Egyptian Papers.

**Sampson between the Hebrew Pillars**

Before you run off to apply this method to your scripture reading, you should know Hebrew. And so, we provide for your further amusement and misinformation, the following list of totally specious instructional items from Sampson’s Hebrew grammar.

First of all, in Sampson’s view no difference exists between Hebrew and Aramaic (p. 70).\(^3\) So the most important question you can ask yourself is “What kind of language is this, that is Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek and Mayan?” (p. 132). Please pay close attention to the following important features of the language.

**Script**

“We can watch the Hebrew coming right out of the Hieratic as Proto-Hebrew ideograms are combined, or should I say overlaid” (p. 127). “Tet \(\odot\) does not appear in the earliest examples of Hebrew or semitic writing at all” (p. 154, but see the chart on p. 157).\(^4\) The Hebrew letter \(\checkmark\) means “Month [sic]” (p. 31).\(^5\)

---


\(^3\) Hebrew and Aramaic are different languages, each with their own dialects. They are closely related. Sampson, nevertheless, time and again treats them as identical. Words which are certainly Aramaic are listed as Hebrew. Sampson’s lexical treatments are not necessarily trustworthy.

\(^4\) Sampson’s chart shows that this letter does appear in the early examples of Semitic writing. It also shows up in Proto-Canaanite inscriptions (13th–12th centuries B.C.) and the Ahiram sarcophagus (1000 B.C.) according to The
The Hebrew letter “Shin [has to do] with that which comes forth from the womb, as Shin was derived from the Egyptian hieroglyphic” (p. 125; cf. p. 71).6 “Hebrew today has points and lines called dagesh to mark where the different vowel sounds appear in a word” (p. 121).7

Lexicography

The name Elohim “is most sacred to the Jews and must always be held in such respect that it is never to be spoken out loud” (p. 37) even in the daily Shema.8

“As a verb ש is rendered as is or are” (p. 125).9

The Hebrew word behind “ordained” in D&C 50:26 (!) “is רו Foundation” (p. 112).10

Apparenty millions of Jews throughout the centuries have been misspelling the Hebrew word for “yes” because of “an error in transliteration from the Greek in the septuagint [sic]” (p. 68).11

Egyptian

Since, according to Sampson, Egyptian is the same as Hebrew, we should look at the dialect of Egyptian that is Hebrew. From

5 This is a typographical error, one of too many in this work. It should read “mouth.”
6 Sampson’s chart on p. 31, of course, contradicts this.
7 The dagesh indicates that a letter should be doubled; see E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 55–56.
8 While this is true for certain pious Jews, most do not consider this to be as sacred as the tetragrammaton.
9 Sampson has the verb ב in mind. The two words are etymologically unrelated.
10 There is no Hebrew original for this section of the Doctrine and Covenants.
11 The Septuagint does not transliterate this word into Greek. The etymology for this word is certain, and Sampson simply does not have any evidence for his assertions.
Sampson's point of view, "Joseph Smith knows Hebrew backwards and Egyptian hieroglyphics at their foundation" (p. 143). First, "the Egyptian system of the papyrus was built upon a foundation of five or, even better, a mathematics of proportions kept in fractions" (p. 137). "Hieroglyphics can only be fully understood by dissecting the component ideograms back out to their basic parts from which they were created. Mayan, Egyptian, and Chinese are all examples" (p. 152). This is because "Egyptian hieroglyphics were developed out of the same school of thought that Melchizedek was speaking from" (p. 141). So when we see the hieroglyph for two mountains, we should think "Mountain or wickedness (we are reading this backward, should be valley or lower regions)" (p. 141). Of course, the famous two lands of Egypt, "upper and lower Egypt, ... were types of the upper heavens and lower hells" (p. 141).

If this does not make sense, just remember that "if this [Chinese?, the so-called "Alphabet and Grammar"]? is a

12 Mathematically, this sentence makes no sense as any proportion can be expressed with a fraction. Egyptologically it makes no sense at all; the Egyptian numbers use a base ten system, not a base five system.

13 Egyptian and Chinese can both be understood without dissecting the hieroglyphs. Of course, it does not hurt if one knows where the parts came from. But hieratic words were read as a unit without dividing the words into various glyphs or recognition of what the original glyph was. This is most clear from the way ligatured hieratic is transformed into demotic. In demotic, though the shapes of the words resemble the earlier hieratic, there is no way to figure out what the original hieroglyphs were from the demotic ligatures, but the word can still be read. To use an English example, one does not need to know that the letter was originally an ox’s head to read it.

14 This glyph is used both to write the word "evil" and the word "mountain." I can think of no spellings of any Egyptian words for "valley" that use this glyph.

15 This is simply false. Upper and Lower Egypt refer to the lower lands of the north by the sea, and the upper lands of the south, upstream. If the Egyptians wanted to talk about heaven and hell, they certainly had the vocabulary to do so quite plainly.

16 I cannot find the antecedent for the word this from Sampson’s text and have supplied the two most likely nouns, although neither one makes sense.
"Reformed Egyptian," then that might explain how the term Zip became the Proto-Mayan word for virgin" (p. 132).17

**History according to Sampson**

Sampson has an interesting version of history that explains these language shifts. "Scientists calculate that it takes 2.5 billion years for the universe to turn completely one time" (p. 139). Though he has no daughter mentioned in the scriptures, Abraham "may have named his daughter after the home planet that he found by 'Urim and Thummim' " (p. 108). "Lehi, a prophet of the House of Joseph, was familiar with both Hebrew and Egyptian and used Egyptian demonic [sic] (shorthand form of hieroglyphics) characters to write a ‘reformed Egyptian’ Hebrew-based hybrid language" (p. 119).18 "It was in this city [On/Heliopolis], at the time of the height of Israel’s power, that there was a functioning Jewish Temple complete and authorized by the Levites” (p. 119).19 “Pythagoras and Lehi were contemporaries in the same land” (p. 121).20 "The name of Venus among the Persians was Mitra [sic]. Herodotus informs us that her [sic] name among the Scythians was Artim pasa. Mitra [sic] is Artim” (p. 131).21 “Barnabas was probably a member of Christ’s Sanhedrin” (p. 32).22 And to add some speculative latter-day mind reading, Sampson informs us that “Joseph [Smith] believes that with the aid of Urim and Thummim the ancients were able to look as far as the center of this universe” (p. 139).

---

17 A friend of mine, a student of the eminent Yale Mayanist Michael Coe, said upon reading this passage, “No wonder Michael Coe thinks Mormons are on the lunatic fringe.”

18 Demotic, in spite of its nickname, is not “demonic." Sampson’s sample of demotic characters (p. 5) is authentic but not coherent, as he has taken one from one place and another from another, but almost never an entire word.

19 There were Jewish temples in Egypt at Elephantine and Leontopolis, both dating to periods after the Jewish exile. If Sampson has made a major discovery, he ought to provide evidence.

20 Pythagoras and Lehi were contemporaries but not in the same land.

21 Mithra was not Venus. Herodotus mentions no “Artim pasa.”

22 Sampson seems to mean that Barnabas was one of Christ’s Seventy. The Sanhedrin is a different, Jewish body.
You might think that these things are not so, but it does not matter. "If I were a God," Sampson informs us, "all knowing, all loving, this is exactly how I would do it" (p. 153).

However, enough silly trivia; Sampson is trying to set forth a program of scriptural study.

The Kabbalah Game

Joe Sampson is only playing games with his readers. Beginning with the third chapter he informs his reader that he "will now start to play the Kabbalah game in earnest" (p. 15). Apparently he thinks that several of the "Book of Mormon prophet[s] play this game" (p. 55; cf. p. 61). "Round and around we go" (p. 126) and where this leads Sampson himself seems to have no idea. For him this is "really fun" (p. 127) even if it is a nightmare for his reader. "If you don't know the rules of this game you miss all the fun" (p. 131). Sampson has his fun at the reader's expense since he never provides a complete list of his rules. Apparently he does not feel the need to, since "little children of many nations learn very early the different rules of the game in their native tongue, before they are three years old" (p. 155). From what I have been able to make out, here is a list of Joe Sampson's rules to the Kabbalah game:

1. "The key to ideographic meanings is to be found in finding the relationship of each consonant to the Father and Mother letters. . . . To each of the sounds of power were attached an ideographic symbol which relates to the scriptural context of the eternal meaning of the sound" (pp. 151–52). "The compounding or overlapping of ideographic symbols to form in an artistic way, or to hide a language or message within another language, is a technique used to form complex hieroglyphic glyphs" (p. 152). Translation: Each letter has a specific hidden meaning associated with its shape and sound.

2. "The reconciliation of the combined meanings of these letters [in a word] produces the definition of the word created" (p. 152).

3. "Reverse the order of the ideograms and positives can in many cases be turned into words of negative context" (p. 152). This Sampson refers to as tumarab. "The Greeks loved this little
tumarah trick. They took the Egyptian Goddess Neitha [sic] reversed the letters and produced Athene [sic]” (p. 131).

4. "Ideograms are not just linguistic, they are mathematical in nature and can be used as such to interrelate ideas with mathematics" (p. 152). This is called Gematria. Besides the usual numerological manipulations, Sampson has come up with new uses: “The Arabic word for ‘five’ is hams, which sound reminds us that Egypt was the land of the children of ‘Ham’ ” (p. 138).

5. “The chaining of triplet letter combinations (roots) in alphabetical order, forms strings of related words and concepts, so as to have encoded, the holy language with the basic instructions of the overall script and plot of the passion play we call this creation. These strings of related words and ideas form the outline and undergirding structures of parable and prophecy” (p. 152; example on pp. 299–300).

6. “The word mysteries is used . . . as a flag for the reader to let him know that the text which is going to follow is of Kabbalistic approach” (p. 54).

7. The words crown, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, mercy, justice, strength, severity, beauty, victory, splendor, glory, power, foundation, and kingdom are the “ten key words [sic]” found in “various combinations or orders” comprising what “are known as Paths of Wisdom” (p. 35). These are the nodes on the Sefirot.

8. “The rule is that the word must be repeated four times for the encoding to be complete” (p. 55), “seven being the number of completion or wholeness” (p. 57).

Now do you understand?

Actually, I must confess that there really is a deep, hidden, secret message lurking through the pages of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and even the Bible. It consists of interrelated concepts repeated over and over that can, if heeded, not only completely change someone’s outlook on life, but one’s life itself. We have been trying to keep this a secret for years, but since Joe Sampson has come so close, we might as well reveal the secret. The key, however, is not hidden in the Sefirot but in Moses 6:52. The chapter number is the number of days of work in the week in the Ten Commandments; the verse number is the number of weeks in a year. Any-
one who searches through the scriptures for the concepts covered in this verse will see that these are much more pervasive than the Sefiroth concepts Sampson advocates.

**Misconceptions about the Kirtland Egyptian Papers**

Joe Sampson bases much of his text on interpretations he thinks he has culled from the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. The Kirtland Egyptian Papers are a collection of documents in the Church archives written by Warren Parrish, Oliver Cowdery, and William W. Phelps. Two of the documents have Joseph Smith’s handwriting on them. They date from the Kirtland period with the exception of two drafts of manuscripts of the book of Abraham in the handwriting of Willard Richards which date from the Nauvoo period. Critics of the Church and the book of Abraham assume that because several of the documents are in the hands of men who served at some time in their lives as Joseph Smith’s scribes, all of these papers are the work of Joseph Smith. Sampson also assumes this. This and other assumptions that Sampson and others make cannot hold under historical scrutiny and deserve analysis here.

Sampson states, “It appears from Joseph Smith’s diary entries that he spent much of his free time during the period of October through the middle of December of 1835 working on the ‘alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and Grammar of the Egyptian languages as practiced by the ancients’ ” (p. 120). But this is demonstrably false. Between October and December 1835 Joseph Smith mentions exhibiting the papyri fifteen times, transcribing four times, but the “Egyptian alphabet” was mentioned only once. The original entry in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery deserves careful examination: “October 1,
1835. This after noon labored on the Egyptian alphabet, in company with brsr. O. Cowdery and W. W. Phelps: The system of astronomy was unfolded."27 It has been generally assumed that the "Egyptian alphabet" is the Kirtland Egyptian Papers Egyptian manuscript (hereafter KEPE) #1 or the so-called Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar.28 This is highly unlikely as (1) KEPE 1 is in the handwriting of W. W. Phelps and Warren Parrish;29 (2) it was four weeks later, on 29 October 1835, that Warren Parrish "commenced writing for me [Joseph Smith];"30 (3) the title of the manuscript is "Grammar & alphabet [sic] of the Egyptian language."31 If any of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers are to be identified with the documents referred to in the journal entries it would be KEPE 3–5, in the handwritings identified as those of W. W. Phelps, Joseph Smith, and Oliver Cowdery and bearing the titles (apparently lost in the case of deteriorated KEPE 5) of "Egyptian alphabet."32 Thus there is no solid evidence that Joseph Smith worked on KEPE 1, the so-called Alphabet and Grammar, during this period of time, or at any period of time.33 It was never presented as scripture or as revelation to the Saints and they are not under any obligation to defend it, believe it, or even understand it.34 I find nothing in Sampson's study or in his

27 Dean C. Jessee, ed., The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 60; see also Jessee, ed., Papers of Joseph Smith, 2:45. The handwriting is identified on ibid., 2:43 n. 1, and Jessee, ed., Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, 649 n. 7.

28 The most reliable guide to the Kirtland Egyptian Papers is still the chart in Hugh Nibley, "The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers," BYU Studies 11/4 (Summer 1971): 351. The chart identifies each manuscript in the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, the handwriting on each, and gives the official number in the Church Archives that should be followed to avoid confusion.

29 Ibid.


31 Nibley, "Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers," 351.

32 Ibid.

33 Pace Frederick M. Huchel, in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/2 (1994): 153. Huchel has identified the wrong documents, and his citations, covered above, do not demonstrate what he claims.

34 On 8 April 1843, Joseph Smith said: "I make this broad declaration, that whenever God gives a vision of an image, or beast, or figure of any kind, He always holds Himself responsible to give a revelation or interpretation of the meaning thereof, otherwise we are not responsible or accountable for our belief
reproduction of Robert Fillerup’s work in the appendix that convinces me that Sampson understands the material at all.

Sampson, like others, assumes that the Kirtland Egyptian Papers are Joseph Smith’s working papers in producing the book of Abraham because there are four manuscripts of the book of Abraham among them. It is, however, quite unlikely that they can be so classified. Were they Joseph Smith’s working papers for the book of Abraham, we should expect that they would show the marks for the revisions that Joseph Smith made on his translations of the book of Abraham on 9 March 1842 in preparation for its publication.35 None of the manuscripts show these marks. Therefore, none of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers can be said to be Joseph Smith’s working papers for the book of Abraham.

As for Sampson’s dubious assumption that “Joseph Smith with ‘Urim and Thummim’ looked at the Book of Breathings [sen-sen] and saw the Book of Abraham encoded there” (p. 70), one would have thought that the critics had demonstrated the impossibility of that idea long ago.

Sampson’s book has the makings either of a satire or a work of scholarship, but this book is both and neither. The premise upon which this book is based—that the kabbalah was used to write the Book of Mormon—is wrong to begin with and Sampson’s errors in his scholarship and assumptions guarantee that this book will mainly be used as a source for logical errors. In fact, this book would be extremely funny except the author considers it an expression of his testimony (pp. 313–16). If you cannot take a man’s testimony seriously, it ceases to be funny. It becomes sad.


Atheists and Cultural Mormons Promote a Naturalistic Humanism

Reviewed by Louis Midgley

The humanist revolts against the dogmatisms of typical theism but does not admit the dogmatisms that plague his own system.

Sterling M. McMurrin¹

Latter-day Saints may be unaware of the agenda of Prometheus Books. Massimo Introvigne, one of the better informed specialists on the varieties of anti-Mormonism, has recently described the company—one of the two publishers of Religion, Feminism, and Freedom of Conscience—as “the ultimate skeptic press.”² It constitutes an example of what he labels “the secular anti-Mormon movement.”³ Hence it may be significant that this book was published by both Prometheus Books and Signature Books. I

¹ Sterling M. McMurrin, Religion, Reason, and Truth (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), 107.
³ Ibid., 13.
will examine some of the links, ideological and otherwise, between these two publishers and their entrepreneurs.

**Prometheus Books and the Secular Anti-Mormon Movement**

Unlike the varieties of sectarian anti-Mormonism\(^4\) advanced by evangelical fundamentalists bent on promoting a brand of sectarian religiosity or on enticing money from those who can be frightened by the restored gospel,\(^5\) the secular (and presumably less irrational) anti-Mormonism linked to Prometheus Books, again according to Introvigne, “confines itself to the criticism of Mormonism and does not reveal any religious or philosophical ideas which should be adopted by those who abandon Mormonism.”\(^6\) But on this issue Introvigne seems only partly right. He senses that sectarian and secular anti-Mormons may borrow from each other, though otherwise they differ significantly. He is aware of some of this cooperation and borrowing. And he correctly notes that “it is clear that liberal LDS and RLDS intellectuals and historians share some views”\(^7\)—for example, that the Book of

---

4 Introvigne distinguishes between what he labels a secular anti-Mormon movement, which can be generally understood as secular humanism (and which he sees flowing from the likes of Prometheus Books), and a religious counter-Mormon movement, which is sharply divided between a “rational” and “post rational” variety. Ibid, 12. See also his “The Devil Makers: Contemporary Evangelical Fundamentalist Anti-Mormonism,” *Dialogue* 27/1 (Spring 1994): 154–58. Introvigne is a partner in one of Italy’s largest law firms and also teaches sociology of religion at the Foggia branch of the Theological University of Southern Italy. He is also the director of the Center for Studies of New Religions (CESNUR) in Turin, Italy, which was established as part of the “Project New Religious Movements” founded in 1988 by the International Federation of Catholic Universities on behalf of four Vatican departments.

5 There are 556 agencies and individuals worldwide (but mostly in the United States) involved in a furious attack on what they like to call “cults”—Introvigne’s “new religious movements.” This is up from 510 in 1991. For the most recent listing, see Keith E. Tolbert and Eric Pement, *The 1993 Directory of Cult Research Organizations: A Worldwide Listing of 729 Agencies and Individuals* (Trenton, MI: American Religious Center, 1993). Tolbert and Pement indicate that 174 of these have targeted Latter-day Saints; cf. ibid., 51–53, for the list of these agencies.


7 Ibid., 21.
Mormon is not an authentic ancient text. And he is correct that it would be "difficult to infer a conspiracy from cooperation" between cultural Mormons (for example, those linked to Signature Books) and RLDS spokesmen and scholars. He also assumes that those he labels "conservative Utah Mormons"—he has in mind Stephen E. Robinson, Daniel C. Peterson, and me—"even accuse part of the LDS and RLDS intellectual community of cooperating with anti-Mormons to promote their revisionist view of Joseph Smith and the Restoration. Similar accusations have been made with respect to the editorial policy of Signature Books."

Robinson, Peterson, and I have identified the revisionist agenda furthered by George D. Smith through Signature Books and the private foundation known as Smith Research Associates (and also through the atheist magazine Free Inquiry), an agenda which is also visible in other publishing outlets currently influenced, if not fully controlled, by those associated with Signature Books. In these venues the opinions and ideology of "liberal" RLDS "intellectuals" are clearly welcomed and promoted. And it is also clear that both secular and sectarian anti-Mormons sometimes find some of this literature useful for their own purposes.

However, merely because Robinson, Peterson, and I have pointed to a few instances of cultural Mormons and other dissidents on the fringes of the Mormon intellectual community making common cause with RLDS "liberals" or even with well-known anti-Mormon publicists, or instances of anti-Mormons, both secular and sectarian, drawing upon or making common cause with former Mormon intellectuals or dissidents, does not mean that we are describing a conspiracy of some kind. We have in mind exactly what Introvigne properly describes as informal "cooperation" between diverse agencies and individuals. No

---

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
one with whom I am familiar has inferred a dark conspiracy from such cooperation.

Introvigne may not be entirely wrong when he claims that the secular variety of anti-Mormonism “is not interested in Mormon theology,” but “concentrates on the alleged social harm of Mormonism, the fraud perpetrated on the gullible, the LDS ‘corporate empire’ and its influence on state and national politics.” The secular anti-Mormon pictures Joseph Smith as

a fraud seeking money, power, and sex. Most of these features have been perpetuated by the current leadership of Mormonism, which has evolved into a powerful and economical kingdom. These attitudes are epitomized in publications by “professional skeptics” whose aim is to “debunk” the claims made for religious miracles.

And such people “normally publish with the Buffalo-based press Prometheus Books.”

There are several striking examples of the publication of such attacks on the Church by secular anti-Mormons through Prometheus Books or agencies linked to it such as the atheist magazine Free Inquiry. Introvigne identifies one example; I will identify several others. According to Introvigne,

by far the most often quoted recent work written by a secular rationalist anti-Mormon is Trouble Enough,

---

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 14.
published in 1984 by psychiatrist Ernest H. Taves. Besides writing for *Playboy*, Taves is a member of the professional skeptics' organization CSICOP and his book has been published by the ultimate skeptic press, Prometheus Books.\(^\text{15}\)

Introvigne also notes that "professional skeptics no matter how clever in exposing all sorts of frauds, are not immune from being fooled by their present-day counterparts. Thus, it is not surprising to find that Dr. Taves is among the many victims of Mark Hofmann."\(^\text{16}\) Introvigne chides Prometheus Books for allowing Taves to market his attack on the Church, which makes much of what has turned out to be a counterfeit blessing supposedly given by Joseph Smith to his son on January 17, 1844, even after the exposure of Mark Hofmann's spectacular forgeries. Taves was confident in 1984 that this supposed "blessing," had it been known earlier, would have changed the course of history by making it clear that the Reorganization had the legitimate claim to prophetic succession.\(^\text{17}\) Introvigne feels that Prometheus Books should not be applauded for continuing "to circulate, at least as late of [as?] 1992, Taves' book without a word of caution about the bogus nature of the celebrated document."\(^\text{18}\)

---


\(^\text{16}\) Introvigne, "The Image of the RLDS Church," 16.

\(^\text{17}\) Taves, *Trouble Enough*, 200.

\(^\text{18}\) Introvigne, "The Image of the RLDS Church," 16. In 1991, however, Taves corrected an earlier opinion that he grounded on a Hofmann forgery. In a book in which he strives to relate "some interesting aspects of Mormon history in the period" from the assassination of Joseph Smith to the coming of the transcontinental railroad to Utah, he acknowledges that in 1984, when he referred to the Anthon transcript, he "had reproduced a different copy of such characters than had surfaced in May 1980. Because of a recent series of events in Salt Lake City, it is now known that this 'Anthon transcript' is a forgery, sold by Mark W. Hofmann to the church under false pretenses." Taves, *This Is the Place: Brigham Young and the New Zion* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), 35 n. 3. Taves claims to have been raised in Utah in a large family that was "half Mormon, half Mennonite." Ibid., 34. He also claims that he did "not intend to present another biography of Brigham Young," nor "a comprehensive history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," but merely some
Prometheus Books has published other equally ambitious attacks on Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the restored gospel. One such attack is contained in *The Final Superstition*, a book written by Joseph L. Daleiden, an economist who, according to his own account, started out to write about economics and ended up attacking God instead.19

Daleiden strives to replace what he understands as the truly terrible superstition of belief in God with his fully rational understanding of the world, his version of true "religion." In so doing he makes a frontal attack on Joseph Smith. "There are," he claims, "many unimpeachable sources which provide overwhelming evidence of the true nature of the founder of Mormonism."20 But Daleiden has only two sources: an essay by George D. Smith Jr.,21 owner of Signature Books, and the published version of Ed Decker's unseemly movie, *The God Makers.*22

Daleiden seems fond of what Ed Decker has to say about Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints.23 But he also finds "it astounding that writers such as Ed Decker and Dave Hunt can do such a thorough job unraveling the pagan origins of Mormonism, yet fail to see that Christianity is based on the same myths."24 Instead of facing the problems their polemic against Mormonism creates for their brand of sectarian religiosity, Decker and Hunt, according to Daleiden, "narrow-mindedly attribute . . . to the work of the Devil" anything that might raise questions about their own ideology. "Had they been a little more objective, they would

---

20 Ibid., 28.
23 Daleiden, *The Final Superstition*, 28-37, for his treatment of the "Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints—the Mormons." This is taken from the heading on page 28.
24 Ibid., 364.
have traced the basis of the Christian belief to the ancient myths as I have done,” Daleiden concludes. He seems unaware of the extreme hostility to Ed Decker among the less irrational, sectarian anti-Mormons.

One rather notable feature of Daleiden’s book and much of the literature flowing from Prometheus Books and found in the atheist magazine Free Inquiry is that a concerted effort is being made to provide exactly what Introvigne claims secular anti-Mormons are not interested in doing, that is, a substitute religion to take the place of faith in God as that is understood by Latter-day Saints. Introvigne, it should be noted, labels the secular critics

25 Ibid.
of the Church as anti-Mormon, and describes the essentially Protestant evangelical attacks on the Church as counter-Mormon movements rather than as anti-Mormon.27 But we have just seen how easily the two may blend, at least in the sense that writers like Daleiden are willing to borrow heavily from even the lunatic fringe of sectarian anti-Mormonism (that is, Ed Decker and company) in order to denounce Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the contemporary Church.28

Perhaps we could say that in anti-Mormonism, whether countercult or secular, an enemy of an enemy is a friend. That this is so seems to be the case, if the recent publishing record of Smith Research Associates and Signature Books is any indication. George Smith, owner of Signature Books and publisher of some rather cunning attacks on the Church, its historical foundations, and essential teachings29 has now joined what Introvigne correctly

28 And evangelicals sometimes promote essentially secular attacks on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon without appearing to realize (or with wanton disregard to the fact) that such attacks are inimical to their own stance. Sandra and Jerald Tanner, for example, offer for sale Brent Metcalfe’s New Approaches to the Book of Mormon. But the authors whose essays appear in that book are not sympathetic with the approach promoted by the Tanners through Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Some of those authors are either indifferent or hostile to Christianity in any form. When in 1977 a “Latter-day Saint Historian” [D. Michael Quinn] published a booklet entitled Jerold and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism, the Tanners responded with Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1978). They still offer this item for sale. But they also praise Quinn, no longer a Latter-day Saint, since that suits their partisan agenda. In their most recent tabloid, they advertise their scathing attack on Quinn, while also offering for sale his 1981 talk attacking Elders Boyd K. Packer and Ezra Taft Benson and me. In the November 1994 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, the Tanners claim that this is “one of the best speeches ever given by a Mormon historian” and boast that Quinn therein “attacked the suppressive policies advocated by Apostles Benson and Packer.” This talk, initially circulated by both Quinn and the Tanners, was entitled “On Being a Mormon Historian.” It is now available in an expanded version as “On Being a Mormon Historian (and Its Aftermath),” in Faithful History, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 69–111, which is offered for sale by the Tanners with a remark that “this book contains D. Michael Quinn’s speech which infuriated Mormon officials” (p. 16).
29 Signature Books has published books by Protestant evangelical anti-Mormons. For example, Rodger I. Anderson’s Joseph Smith’s New York Reputa-
identifies as the main purveyor of secular anti-Mormonism—Prometheus Books—in furthering his own secular agenda.

The Secular Anti-Mormon Movement Comes to Utah to “Dialogue”

Religion, Feminism, and Freedom of Conscience consists of the proceedings of what was originally described as a “Humanist/Mormon Dialogue.” This conclave was held on September 24–26, 1993, at the University Park Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. The official sponsor was something called the Institute for Inquiry, which is one of several fronts for what is called the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH), Inc. Among other ventures, CODESH publishes Free Inquiry, a magazine launched in 1981 by Paul W. Kurtz to advance the cause of what he calls “secular humanism.” The Kurtzian ideology

---

30 Hereafter to be identified by its subtitle: A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue. All references to essays in this book will be parenthetical, with the author’s name supplied where necessary for clarity.

31 Cost for attending this “dialogue,” without lodging, was $69.00.

32 Paul Kurtz has popularized a credo entitled “Secular Humanist Declaration.” The first such declaration appeared in 1933 and the second in 1977. See Humanist Manifestos I and II, ed. Paul W. Kurtz (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993). Kurtz sees Karl Marx as the leading recent “secular humanist.” But he also strives to distinguish Marx from his various followers who have unwisely attempted to put his ideology into practice and have thereby produced dreadful evils. For additional details, see Louis Midgley, “George Dempster Smith, Jr., on the Book of Mormon,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 4 (1992): 5–12.

33 In addition to publishing Free Inquiry, CODESH sponsors many organizations and activities. Over the years a number of these CODESH-fronts have enlisted distinguished (or wealthy) fellow-travelers. One of these—the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion (aka CSER)—from 1978 to 1990 listed “George Smith, president, Signature Books” as one of its participants.
functions as a secular religion. Those involved with *Free Inquiry* tend to refrain from emphasizing the atheist foundations of the ideology of naturalistic humanism—a more accurate and also less polemical label than “secular humanism.”

Judging from *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*, what took place at the gathering assembled by Paul W. Kurtz (and George D. Smith, Jr.) was not a genuine dialogue between competing or alternative positions and certainly not a debate. A naturalistic humanism was assumed to constitute the truth. Brigham Young University and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were the targets, both being scolded for not conforming to the Kurtzian ideology.

**The Book of Mormon—Either Ignored or Brushed Aside**

Not much was said at the Smith-Kurtz conclave about the Book of Mormon, even though the program had a section entitled “Secular vs. Religious Interpretations of Scripture.” The program listed Brent Lee Metcalfe as a participant, listing as his qualifica-

---

34 For various reasons those associated with *Free Inquiry* seek to avoid having their endeavor known as “religion.” For example, if something like the particular brand of secular modernity advocated by Kurtz is recognized as a “religion,” then it is possible that it might be legally excluded from the public schools rather than promoted therein as the latest fruit of reason and science and thereby made part of a fashionable secular indoctrination. But those not concerned about such essentially political issues see naturalistic humanism as a religion. For example, McMurrin, *Religion, Reason, and Truth*, 109, describes naturalistic humanism as a religion. He borrows his definition of religion from Paul Tillich (1886–1965), a prominent German-American Protestant theologian: “Religion is man’s ultimate concern and commitment.” And McMurrin emphatically treats naturalistic humanism as a genuine alternative to faith in God. Hence the following: “The strength of humanistic religion is its supreme commitment to reason, its faith in man’s creative intelligence,” and so forth (ibid., 75, cf. 77–79, 93–95). Instead of faith in God, and hence in at least the possibility of redemption from sin and the terrors of mortality, naturalistic humanism involves, according to McMurrin, faith in man, whatever that might mean.

35 I have borrowed the label “naturalistic humanism” from McMurrin; see *Religion, Reason, and Truth*, xii, 89, 81, 94, 280. This label is also employed by others. See, for example, Corliss Lamont, “Naturalistic Humanism,” *Free Inquiry* 7/1 (Winter 1986–87): 6.
tion his editorship of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, a book published in 1993 by George D. Smith’s Signature Books containing ten essays attacking the Book of Mormon. A *Mormon/Humanist Dialogue* contains transcripts of talks by Gerald A. Larue and Robert S. Alley defending secularized interpretations of the scriptures; nothing appears defending the truth claims of the scriptures. For reasons not indicated, Metcalfe’s talk was not published.

The stance taken on the Book of Mormon at the Smith-Kurtz conclave seems to have been set out by Gerald A. Larue, who claimed that when Humanists approach authoritative scripture, whether it be the Bible or the Book of Mormon, we do not abandon critical faculties. We bring to our examination the best analytical tools of our professions whether they be literary and historical analysis, or the fruits of archaeological research and studies in comparative religion, or simply good old common sense. (p. 30)

If Kurtz and Smith had arranged a genuine confrontation between two competing claims to religious truth, then the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims would have taken

---


37 Given recent publicity surrounding Metcalfe, virtually all of which was generated by Metcalfe himself, George Smith and his associates at Signature Books may have thought it unwise to publish something by him in *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*. Instead of including something by Metcalfe, a talk by Gary James Bergera, who manages Signature Books for George Smith, was included in the volume. Bergera has made a habit of mocking Brigham Young University. See Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985).

38 Larue, explaining his fondness for a “literary-historical” approach to scripture (p. 17), claims that “the scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, notably the Book of Mormon, are also subject to such inquiry” (pp. 17–18). In itself this remark is unobjectionable, but Larue then asks his readers to consult Brent Lee Metcalfe’s *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*. This volume, however, does not appear to be an example of a sound literary-historical approach to the Latter-day Saint scriptures.
center stage, and at least someone would have defended both. So it turns out that what is not said about the Book of Mormon is perhaps the best single indication of the agenda at work behind the program set out by Smith and Kurtz.

However, the Book of Mormon turns up a few times in *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*. For example, it is cited when it can be called upon to seemingly support the ideology grounded in naturalistic humanism (George Smith, p. xiii), and it is also brushed aside as nineteenth-century fiction (Roberts, p. 52). But mostly it is ignored. Allen Dale Roberts, a critic of the Church whose profession is architecture, admits that Latter-day Saints take it seriously. “However,” he claims, “modern multi-disciplined scholarship has shown the Book of Mormon to be a nineteenth-century product rather than an ancient document as claimed by Joseph Smith” (Roberts, p. 52). Since Roberts operates without the benefit of scholarly citations, it is often difficult to determine what literature he might have in mind, but one can assume that he is referring to the Metcalfe volume already mentioned.39

**A Who’s Who of Cultural Mormon and Humanist Figures**

The participants in the Smith-Kurtz “dialogue” were described in the program as “leading liberal Mormon thinkers and some of America’s best-known advocates of secular humanism.” But those with links to the Latter-day Saint community are not distinguished students of Mormonism, although some are known as dissidents (for example, Lavina F. Anderson, Cecilia K. Farr, and Gary James Bergera), former or current editors of *Dialogue* (L. Jackson Newell, F. Ross Peterson, Martha S. Bradley), or both (Allen Dale Roberts). One surprising feature of *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue* is the absence of Sterling M. McMurrin, emeritus professor of history at the University of Utah. McMurrin has roots in the Mormon culture and seems committed to his brand of naturalistic humanism. In addition, he frequently voices his opinion about Mormon things. As we will see, McMurrin has

been an eloquent spokesman for the religion of naturalistic humanism. His absence from *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue* leaves a major lacuna in the book.

The cadre of Kurtzian “secular humanists,” contrary to the promotional material, is neither well known nor distinguished. Latter-day Saints can be excused for not being familiar with Robert S. Alley (who teaches humanities at the University of Richmond in Virginia), Gerald A. Larue (a retired professor of biblical studies at the University of Southern California), Vern L. Bullough (described as “distinguished professor emeritus at State University of New York at Buffalo”),

---

40 Vern L. Bullough, in *Free Inquiry* 8/3 (Summer 1988): 58, is described as the “author and editor of more than 20 books on history, sexology, neurology and other fields.” With Bonnie Bullough, he has written or edited at least eight books on nursing. Earlier he was “dean natural and social sciences at the State University of New York College at Buffalo [sic]” (ibid., 58). He is currently listed in *Free Inquiry* as Dean of the Institute for Inquiry, which offers “courses in humanism and skepticism,” as well as holding “an annual summer session and periodic workshops.” He is also listed as professor of history, California State University, Northridge, and as part of the Secretariat of The Academy of Humanism, a front for CODESH “established to recognize distinguished humanists and to disseminate humanistic ideals and beliefs”; see *Free Inquiry*, inside back cover, any recent issue. The Humanism/Mormon Dialogue in 1993 was cosponsored by his Institute for Inquiry. Bullough’s publications include *An Annotated Bibliography of Homosexuality* (New York: Garland, 1976); *The Frontiers of Sex Research* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1979); *Homosexuality: A History* (New York: Garland, 1979); with Bonnie Bullough, he edited *Human Sexuality: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1994); with Lillit Sentz, he edited *Prostitution: A Guide to Sources, 1960–1990* (New York: Garland, 1992); with Bonnie Bullough, he produced *Prostitution: An Illustrated Social History* (New York: Crown, 1978); with James Brundage, *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1976); with Bonnie Bullough, *Sin, Sickness and Sanity: A History of Sexual Attitudes* (New York: Garland, 1977), and so forth. With Gerald Larue, he is a Senior Editor of *Free Inquiry*, to which he is a frequent contributor. See, for example, his essay on “The Causes of Homosexuality: A Scientific Update,” *Free Inquiry* 13/4 (Fall 1993): 40–42, 44–47. Bullough has also opined on Mormon topics; see his “Mormonism Re-veiled,” *Free Inquiry* 9/1 (Winter 1988/89): 57–58, which is a review of Linda Sillitoe and Allen Dale Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Murders* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988)—Signature Books placed an advertisement for this book on the following page; and “A Mormon University,” *Free Inquiry* 6/3 (Summer 1986): 58–59, which is a jaundiced, favorable review of Bergera and Priddis’s *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*. See also Thomas
(retired professor of nursing at State University of New York at Buffalo).41 And Paul W. Kurtz (also retired from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he taught philosophy) is not exactly a household name, especially among the Saints, even though he is the author of “more than 500 articles and twenty-five books” and the editor of an atheist magazine.42 George Smith, however, is now rather well known in Mormon intellectual circles for his publishing enterprises and for his hostility toward Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.43

How might “some of America’s best-known advocates of secular humanism” have gotten involved in a conversation with “leading liberal Mormon thinkers”? George Smith, who is listed as editor of A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue,44 and who owns Sig-


41 Vern Bullough refers to having grown up in Salt Lake City (p. 64), and, he claims, his “heart goes out to my BYU friends” (p. 71), but “as a humanist I can,” he says, “only sympathize with my besieged colleagues.” Flynn, “The Humanist/Mormon Dialogue,” 55, indicates that the Bulloughs “are former Mormons,” but Bullough’s remarks give the impression of having been generated by someone with little understanding of Mormon things.


43 George Smith is the owner of Signature Books. He has also begun to publish books through his “Smith Research Associates,” a private foundation through which he finances what many now recognize as anti-Mormon propaganda. Of course, not everything he publishes can be so described. For more details on the anti-Mormon aspect of George Smith’s publishing ventures, see Daniel C. Peterson’s “Questions to Legal Answers,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 4 (1992): xvi–xxiv, xxxviii, xliii–xlvi, i, liv–lv, lxiv, lxix–lxxi; see also Midgley, “George Dempster Smith, Jr.,” 5, 7–12.

44 An account of the courtship and marriage of George and Camilla Miner Smith in their own words is found in Facts and Fancies of the Glen Bryant Miner and Caroline Eyring Miner Family (Salt Lake City: Glen B. and Caroline Miner, 1981), 243–51. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple on 10 July 1970.
nature Books—one of the book's publishers—has ties with Paul Kurtz and *Free Inquiry*, where a decade earlier he published an essay entitled "Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon." This essay attacking Joseph Smith's claims was republished by Prometheus Books in 1989 in *On the Barricades*, an anthology of essays from *Free Inquiry*. And George Smith's name has appeared frequently in the pages of *Free Inquiry*.

**Naturalistic Humanism?**

Paul Kurtz saw the occasion of the "dialogue" between humanists and cultural Mormons as "historic, for as far as we are aware this is the first formal exchange of ideas by Mormons and humanists. In a pluralistic society," he claims, "it is important that people from diverse religious and nonreligious traditions engage in debate to define differences and more meaningfully to discover common ground" (p. xvii). Unfortunately, he does not indicate why this is so.

Instead, Kurtz strives to define "humanism." He grants that the term "means different things to different people" (p. xvii). He also admits that, "like 'democracy,' 'socialism,' 'peace,' 'motherhood,' or 'virtue,' humanism is all things to all men" (p. xvii). After giving up on finding a satisfactory definition, Kurtz insists that the term "has been used to justify a set of ethical principles" (p. xviii). And then, without argument, he links humanism and freedom. But what is meant by "freedom" is no easier to pin down than is the meaning of "humanism." Accord-

---


46 See Basil, Gehrman, and Madigan, eds., *On the Barricades*, 137-56.

47 In addition to publishing essays in *Free Inquiry*, George Smith has been listed in *Free Inquiry* as a contributor first to a Religion and Biblical Criticism Research Project sponsored by CODESH and then later to the Committee for the Scientific Study of Religion (CSER). Flynn, "The Humanist/Mormon Dialogue," 55. describes George Smith's "Salt Lake City-based Signature Books" as having "perhaps the sharpest point of focus for church rebuke. No fewer than five scholars published under its imprint have been excommunicated." Flynn has in mind Lavina F. Anderson, Maxine Hanks, D. Michael Quinn, Paul Toscano, and David P. Wright. And "for its part, Signature has courageously released new titles by Quinn and Toscano since their excommunication" (ibid.).
ing to Kurtz, "the first principle of humanism, thus, is its commitment to the idea of freedom. But what," he asks, "does that mean?" (p. xviii). "Freedom" means different things in different contexts to different people. Kurtz lumps together several of these sometimes radically different meanings. (Propaganda often relies on this sort of equivocal use of language.)

George Smith claims that it was in “the Renaissance, when humanism was born” (p. x). Kurtz, unlike Smith, sees a form of humanism at work much earlier than the Renaissance. He claims as part of his “humanist” heritage figures like Socrates, as well as Epicurus and Lucretius—whose writings provide the most bold manifestation of atheism in the ancient world. We may agree that there was a classical humanism among the ancient Greeks, and that the Renaissance was an effort to recover something of that variety of humanism. And there have been other “humanisms” as well.

George Smith can be forgiven for not describing in detail the various “humanisms” of the past. He seems to have striven to establish two points: that there was and is a “humanism” that values a “freedom” grounded in “rationality,” and that Brigham Young University and the Church have turned against these values.

48 McMurrin, Religion, Reason, and Truth, 79, asserts that naturalistic humanism “has no theologians, because it has no gods. But it has prophets, poets, and philosophers—Democritus, Aristotle, Epicurus, Lucretius, Bruno, and Spinoza; Voltaire, Mill, Bertrand Russell, and John Dewey.” This list of authors is a little puzzling. Did Aristotle dispense entirely with an idea of god? And did not Spinoza advance some form of pantheism? McMurrin may see pantheism, whether grounded in or derived from some ontological speculation or mystical experience or otherwise, as merely a sentimental form of atheism—and if that is his view, then I am in agreement with him. But he should explain and justify his stance. And certain notions of God are consistent with varieties of humanism. For example, McMurrin holds that “Humanism is not easily distinguished from certain types of impersonalistic theism, and in its more sentimental forms it may be regarded as naturalistic pantheism and may have much in common with traditional religious mysticism” (ibid.). And the claim that naturalistic humanists have no gods but still have “prophets” reminds me of the equivocation currently going on among cultural Mormons over who is a “Mormon” and also by those who now want to argue that Joseph Smith was a “prophet,” so to speak, even though there were no angels who visited him, no Lehi colony, no resurrected Jesus of Nazareth and even, for some, no God. When dealing with “theology” we would seem to be in need of a truth-in-labeling law.
which he takes to be part of the Mormon heritage. Smith’s remarks seem intended to set the agenda for *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*, and hence are not a full or even competent account of humanism. We will have to look elsewhere for such a thing.

Though the Smith-Kurtz parley is described as a Mormon dialogue with humanists, there is little in it resembling a conversation between different points of view in which a Latter-day Saint concept and a currently fashionable variety of humanism are compared and contrasted. Instead, a ragtag group was assembled “to discuss freedom of conscience as it applies to academic freedom and to expressions of feminism” (Smith, p. vii) at Brigham Young University and in the Church generally. This book blasts away at Brigham Young University and the Church for not conforming to Kurtzian ideology.

Hence, according to Smith, “what is open to debate is whether principles of what Mormons refer to as free agency apply to feminists and to teachers at Brigham Young University, which is owned by the Mormon church” (p. vii). So the point of this so-called “dialogue,” let me emphasize, is not to discuss the viability of secular assumptions, that is, the religion of what Kurtz calls “secular humanism,” in the light of the restored gospel, or even to compare and contrast Kurtzian ideology with the beliefs of genuine Latter-day Saints; the point of the book is to roast Brigham Young University (and the Church) for failing to act on the basis of what Mormon dissidents claim are both secular and Mormon beliefs. But this cannot be done without revealing the essentially atheist bias of Kurtzian ideology.

I will illustrate the atheist bias grounding *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*. Signs of it can be found in George Smith’s opening remarks where he claims that, following the Renaissance, a “thirst for understanding began to challenge subservient reliance on both the state and received tradition” (p. xi). And then “by the nineteenth century humanism incorporated the positivist thinking of August Comte, which produced a value system independent of belief in God” (p. xi). It would have been more accurate to describe Comte’s “positivism” as simply hostile to belief in God. Be that as it may, we are now close to the ideology advanced by Kurtz in *Free Inquiry*. Smith’s inclusion of Comte’s positivism as part of the ideology of naturalistic humanism would seem to indi-
cate the pedigree of the ideas being peddled in *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*.

**Humanism or Many Humanisms?**

But George Smith also notes that “twentieth-century theologians such as Karl Barth asserted that the Christian gospel was part of humanism in that it taught that each person is uniquely created in the image of God” (p. xi). There is, according to Barth, a “Christian humanism.”49 But it is grounded on what Barth liked to call “God’s humanitarianism.” I will explain.

If we can identify a classical humanism among the Greeks, and a Renaissance humanism, followed by Enlightenment brands of humanism, a Marxist variety and so forth, then we are faced with an assortment of humanisms. We can also agree with George Smith that, since the eighteenth century, humanist assumptions have replaced the religious assumptions previously grounding our culture. The humanisms of the past (especially the older Greek and Renaissance varieties) did not, at least for the most part, openly attack the religious foundations of morality. We can perhaps see a process in which morality is increasingly separated from a religious grounding and divine sanction. Where Renaissance humanists were at least nominally Roman Catholic, in the humanisms that have arisen since the Enlightenment we see increasingly secular, naturalistic ideologies taking over, in which faith in God has become an overt target. The large names in these humanisms are some of those Martin Marty has labeled the “God-killers,” including Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.50

Humanisms at least since the Enlightenment have become increasingly secular, tending to advocate life without divine consolation, a society without church or community, and philosophy apart from or in direct opposition to divine revelation or prophetic truth claims. They have added a fashionable humanitarianism to

---


the older humanist rhetoric; they wish to eliminate all suffering, oppression, privilege, inequality, war, and so forth. And they have replaced God and divine judgment with human progress grounded in or expressed through science and technology. Hence, it is not surprising that Kurtz boasts that "Karl Marx, for a large part of the world, has been the most influential humanist of the twentieth century." And Kurtz holds that the nice thing about Marx was that "he, too, rejected traditional religion and was committed to reason." But Kurtz also admits that some of the most empty, deceptive, oppressive, brutal regimes ever known have trumpeted humanist slogans and ideology, and especially those associated with Marx and his various disciples.

Recently humanists have tended to be embarrassed by communism, if not by Karl Marx. Communism offers a kind of laboratory for investigating the practical impact of the ideology of naturalistic humanism. For example, McMurrin notes that criticism of such a humanism sometimes comes from those who insist that "agnosticism and atheism are one with the godlessness of Marxist communism. They fail to realize," he claims, "that the evil in Soviet communism does not follow inevitably from its atheism, but rather from its false religion." Apparently McMurrin is willing to grant that humanism can become a false religion—when it promotes evils ranging from sybarite behavior to the politics of the police state. McMurrin thus sees communism as "an idolatrous religion . . . which yields a perverted moral idealism." And it must therefore be distinguished from a "true Humanism" that worships man and human history in ways that cause or at least allow democracy to work properly, and so forth.

What exactly is this false god that Marx taught his disciples to worship? Much like Kurtz, McMurrin neglects to explain why those who embrace the Marxist version of naturalistic humanism and with it what he calls "an idolatrous religion in which men worship the false god 'Dialectic,' a religion which gives a pseudo-

---
52 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
divine approval to the consummation of their own interests and creates in them a fanatic devotion to a perverted moral idealism, got that way. Did the atheism of Marx have nothing to do with what he calls the “godlessness of Marxist communism”? But the Marxist version of naturalist humanism is not godless—remember, it is an idolatrous religion and therefore worships a false god. And, “if religion is man’s ultimate concern and commitment,” as McMurrin claims, borrowing from Paul Tillich, then everyone necessarily has a religion of some sort, since everyone is concerned about something, and most of what constitutes the object of our deepest and controlling concern or commitment turns out to be illusions or idols and potentially or actually demonic. The problem then is not in determining whether man is religious, but in distinguishing true from false religion, or God from idols. When McMurrin talks about true and false humanisms, or about humanists who worship false gods, he has accepted something like my formulation of the problem.

Hence, McMurrin at times seems to be saying, and perhaps correctly, that it is idolatry—the worship of false gods—that is the ultimate threat to both individuals and groups. But notice—apparently not even or especially humanists are exempt from the excess or deficiency of idolatry. That is, humanists are not exempt from taking a moral holiday. For Kurtz, as we have noted, evils seem to flow whenever peoples have acted on the teachings of Karl Marx. Be that as it may, it seems that, when naturalistic humanism yields unacceptable results, as it has in the case of communism, it is brushed aside as a false religion—it is not a true humanism. I agree. Presumably the humanist gets it right when the true “God” is worshipped, otherwise we end up with idolatry and the moral evil that necessarily flows from worshipping false gods. So we must ask the question: is there a norm that will assist us in distinguishing true and false humanisms? Or is there a genuine Christian humanism?

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
Christian as Opposed to a Naturalistic Humanism; Need the Believer Abandon All Genuine Humanist Ideals?

Some Christians, observing the catastrophes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have seen in the humanisms of our age a degenerate form of Christianity. It takes on many of the trappings of religion even as it proclaims itself the vehicle for liberating mankind from the oppression of priests and other similar evils, and thereby proudly asserts its own moral superiority. Recent humanisms thus appear to thoughtful observers as surrogate religions and hence forms of idolatry. Critics have argued that a "secular humanism" or Marxism or whatever it might be called may come to constitute the "faith" of a few intellectuals, but such a surrogate "religion" can hardly sustain itself with its denatured moral idealism, and in the face of the allure of power, wealth, or fame. And when the enlightened few try to make their version of atheism the religion of the masses, they seem to need the authority of a police state to suppress competing faiths and, in the name of "liberation," interdict as much as possible the free exercise of religion. Some believers therefore insist that we are faced with a choice between attractive but impoverished humanist ideals and genuine trust in God. But others have denied that such a radical choice is necessary. Let me explain.

As George Smith mentions, Karl Barth, the great Swiss-German Protestant theologian, once argued that by itself and apart from an authentically Christian grounding, humanism, whatever else one might say about it, does not have the power to sustain itself. Where T. S. Eliot called humanism a religion, Barth described it as an ideology. And both insisted that secularized humanisms are weak and perhaps impotent in the face of the evils found in this world—they may even foster or justify terrible evils. At least in the case of communism, apologists for naturalistic brands of humanism tend to agree. Barth believed that Christianity, when grounded on an understanding of the humanitarianism of God, is the true humanism.

Karl Barth dealt with these issues in 1949. As a participant in a conference held that year in Geneva, Switzerland, Barth discovered that Marxist ideologues, as well as various philosophers, scientists,
and so forth, were unable to define humanism, though the Marxists, of course, insisted that only their ideology was the true form. Barth argued that the proper understanding of human things is to be found in the fact of God's humanity, for in the incarnation we see God's love for and identification with humanity. In Jesus, God identifies himself directly and fully with human suffering, sin and guilt. Barth also argued that in Jesus Christ we have a solid ground for defending human rights and human worth, and that nowhere else can we find such a ground. We see in Jesus Christ what we should be and can be through the grace of God. Hence, for Barth, the Christian is not required to deny any genuine virtue or truth that may be found in the array of competing humanisms; the Christian can be for man in the proper way, and not thereby be against God; if he is against God he simply cannot fully be for man.

George Smith, though he mentions Karl Barth, brushes aside his understanding of a Christian humanism with the following observation: "religious thinkers" championed only some of the vaunted principles of humanism, adding that "humanists inevitably found themselves on a collision course with religion" (p. xi). And so it is with Latter-day Saints, according to Smith. But his treatment of these issues is superficial. He seems to assume that faith in God is inimical to the highest and genuine aspirations or interests of mankind. It is typical of naturalistic humanists to assert their moral superiority over those they consider unenlightened believers. We are therefore not surprised to find him claiming that, though Mormonism, in his account, "arose and flourished in an atmosphere of toleration and freedom of conscience that the pluralistic society of nineteenth-century American provided" (p. xi), "a century after freedom of conscience was invoked to form their radically new religion, the rhetoric of some Mormon leaders is ambivalent regarding the universality of such a right" (p. xiii).

And now we come to the point of George Smith's sketchy account of the rise of an essentially naturalistic and atheist brand of humanism and what he considers its quarrels with faith in God. He strives to invoke the slogans of the brand of humanism advanced by Kurtz to embarrass Brigham Young University and the Church. In a series of inaccurate assertions, Smith claims that, "at a time when academic freedom is circumscribed by loyalty
oaths and doctrinal hegemony at Brigham Young University, when Mormon scholars are excommunicated for discussing contradictions in historical documents, it is easy to forget that Mormon leaders have consistently embraced ‘free agency’ as an essential principle of Mormon doctrine” (p. xiii).

There are, incidentally, no “loyalty oaths” administered at Brigham Young University. The faculty are merely expected to believe and act in a manner consistent with what is required of any genuine Latter-day Saint. That requirement hardly constitutes a crime against humanity, though it may seem oppressive to certain cultural Mormon dissidents. And no one has been excommunicated simply “for discussing contradictions in historical documents.”

George Smith employs the expression “free agency,” which he conflates with freedom of conscience, academic freedom, legal rights, and so forth. Hence he complains that “freedom” at Brigham Young University is, as he puts it, “circumscribed by loyalty oaths and doctrinal hegemony,” whatever that might mean. “We hope that the Mormon community will recall its heritage as religious humanists, a heritage of freedom of conscience and expression that requires the community to find a way to listen to thoughtful dissenters” (p. xv). But since when, we must ask, have Latter-day Saints ever thought it necessary to be instructed by unbelievers or apostates?

**For Those Really Interested in Moral Agency, Please Turn to the Book of Mormon**

*A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue* contains charges about alleged violations of “free agency” by Brigham Young University (and the Church). These diatribes are grounded in confusion coupled to quaint slogan-thinking. Some of this confusion could have been avoided if the Book of Mormon had been taken seriously, for in it are found the primary texts setting forth the notion that human beings are moral agents able to distinguish good from evil. George Smith cites 2 Nephi 2:15–16 to support his contention that, “according to the Book of Mormon, one purpose of earth life is to allow eternal beings to make choices” (p. xiii). From his gloss of Lehi’s instructions to Jacob he eventually concludes that
it is wrong for Brigham Young University to forbid "academic work that contradicts fundamental church doctrines" (p. xv).

But the point of Lehi's testament to Jacob was to emphasize that only those who keep the commandments will prosper, while those who do not keep those commandments will be cut off from the presence of God (see 2 Nephi 1:20), and, I might add, place themselves outside the people of God. The freedom Lehi is talking about is a fundamental freedom to choose either liberty and eternal life or captivity and death; it does not appear to be a liberty somehow guaranteeing to dissidents a right to attack fundamental teachings of the restored gospel or the texts upon which they depend from inside the Church or the institutions it sponsors. (Of course, dissidents and unbelievers are legally free to express their opinions outside the community of memory and faith.) There is no mention in the Book of Mormon (or in other Latter-day Saints scriptures) of something called "free agency." The expression "free agency" has been used by Latter-day Saints looking for a catchy label to embody a host of longings for various freedoms and rights, including also the teachings found in the Book of Mormon on moral agency. But whatever the content poured into the expression "free agency," the scriptures simply do not guarantee to dissidents and apostates some right to have it their own way within the Church.

The expression "free agency" is typically employed by the Saints as a way of referring to what the scriptures identify as agency or moral agency, both scriptural terms that clearly refer to the power of choice within each human being that makes us morally responsible before God for our beliefs and actions. Understood in that light, it is simply not possible for anyone or any institution to take away one's agency without taking away life itself. For what is called agency in the Book of Mormon is the power in each human being to distinguish between light and darkness, good and evil, right and wrong; agency identifies the capacity to distinguish and choose between those large moral alternatives. What Lehi teaches is that we are moral agents. And we will be held accountable by God for the choices we make. This teaching is set within the context of a passionate appeal to keep the commandments, or suffer the consequences of being cut off
from the presence of God—the ultimate divine cursing for failure to make or keep covenants with God.

In addition to confusion about what is found in the Latter-day Saint scriptures concerning moral agency, George Smith has not stated accurately what is going on at Brigham Young University. For example, he charges that “BYU faculty have been forbidden from participating in unapproved symposia and conferences” (p. xv). The Brethren merely issued a statement cautioning Latter-day Saints to avoid situations in which their presence would give aid and comfort to enemies of the Church, that is, of appearing with enemies of the Church at symposia. But forbidden? Certainly no more than the Brethren were able to forbid George Smith’s associates from appearing with “advocates of secular humanism” at the Smith/Kuritz symposium.

Smith seems troubled because the Brigham Young University mission statement, as he puts it, “forbids academic work that contradicts church doctrines” (p. xv). Wow! Now there is a powerful restraint on the freedom of those who voluntarily come to Brigham Young University precisely because they are believers. Is Smith suggesting that anti-Mormons, atheists, and other dissidents somehow have or should have either a legal or moral right to teach at Brigham Young University, and the faithful Latter-day Saints a responsibility to pay them to attack the Church and its fundamental teachings?

It appears that Smith is arguing that, in order for Brigham Young University to be the kind of secular institution that he might find attractive, it must permit and even encourage its faculty to advance views radically in opposition to the fundamentals of the restored gospel. If that is not permitted, then what? Someone’s “free agency” is being violated? But exactly how? No one is forced to teach at Brigham Young University. Nothing forces anyone to become or remain a Latter-day Saint, if doing so violates their conscience.

There is simply nothing in the authentic teachings of the Church, properly understood, that requires either the Saints or Brigham Young University to dig their own graves. Certainly members of the Church (including the faculty and students at Brigham Young University) are and ought to be free from whatever they choose to believe is wrong, sinister, or dangerous. I
assume that faithful Latter-day Saints have a right of conscience, just as do atheists or so-called secular humanists.

I find it unseemly for George Smith and Paul Kurtz to hold a conference in which dissidents and those outside of the community of Saints make it their business to attack Brigham Young University and the Church merely because a few people have been disciplined by the Church and have ended up charging the Church with being involved in “spiritual abuse” (Anderson, pp. 3–8). And two of the several people turned down annually for candidacy for continuing faculty status at Brigham Young University have claimed through the press that they were not advanced to candidacy because they published opinions embarrassing to the Church. Incidentally, those having doubts about the wisdom manifest by the faculty review process at Brigham Young University in not advancing Cecilia K. Farr to candidacy for continuing status should examine her talk entitled “Dancing through the Doctrine: Observations on Religion and Feminism” in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue.

Humanist Feminism

The last part of A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue is truly disappointing. It consists of three talks dealing with feminism. Bonnie Bullough, apparently a nurse, summarily finds Brigham Young University and hence the Church guilty of “repression of women” (p. 118). But she believes that, until very recently, everyone has been guilty of this crime. And “humanism” had not become a liberating social force when the Church was getting started. She holds that “humanism did not develop as an organized social movement until the twentieth century when it was established as an arm of the Unitarian church” (p. 118). A what? That is right—an arm of the Unitarian Church. Hence, she admits,

59 Neither Cecilia K. Farr nor David C. Knowlton had been at BYU long enough to reach the point where they might have been denied continuing status. Instead, at the routine preliminary third-year review they were not advanced to candidacy for continuing faculty status, which is quite a different thing from being denied continuing faculty status.

“some call humanism a religion and some do not” (p. 118). Now really? A religion? And even an arm of the Unitarian Church?

Bonnie Bullough then notes that “the great thinkers and writers of the [humanist] movement remain mostly men; and since it is primarily a movement of ideas rather than activities, this is important” (p. 119). She then tries to explain this anomaly before asserting that

Mormonism and humanism differ most on the issue of authority. Mormons believe there is a god who rewards and punishes, and that god is male. More significant is the fact that the president of the Mormon church speaks for God, and God’s pronouncements in the last two decades have been paternalistic and repressive of women. (p. 119)

She also claims that women are seen as equal with men from the humanist perspective, while they are not in any way equal according to Latter-day Saints. We might be forgiven for asking exactly what there is in the ideology of a naturalistic humanism, as such things are understood by Bonnie Bullough, that yields equality for women. The answer is instructive. It is, she claims, because “humanists do not accept divine authority,” and “they do not believe in an after-life, heaven and hell, divine punishment, or divine rewards. Women are as devoid of divine support as men,” she claims, “so they are at the most basic level equal” (p. 120). This is naturalistic humanism at its very best—a real shout of joy; it simply does not get any better than this.

But there is more “good news,” for, according to Bonnie Bullough, “some Mormon women have lost the love and support of men who are threatened by women’s drive for freedom” (p. 121). But instead of freedom, what she really has in mind is power, for she immediately complains about how Latter-day Saint “women have lost power from the early church to the present time” (p. 121). And this is so because men have at the same time been acquiring and abusing power. So the struggle is political, with the end being power and not merely some appropriate equalities.

The women whose views are represented in A Mormon/ Humanist Dialogue seem deeply concerned, even obsessed, with
power. In addition to Bonnie Bullough's comments, Lavina F. Anderson refers to a "power struggle," to "the sense of powerlessness," and to a need for a "sense of empowerment" for the women she strives to represent (pp. 4–5, 8). And Marti Bradley claims that she hears "too many [Mormon] women apologize for their statements of power as they acknowledge concern about women's issues and protest the current state of affairs" (p. 124). She also affirms that "we feminists are the Reds of an earlier generation. Many believe we pose the most significant threat yet confronted in the twentieth century to the integrity of the LDS church and the patriarchal powerhold of the Mormon community" (pp. 124–25, emphasis added). Finally, she complains about "the narrowing of women's political power within the [LDS] community" (p. 125, emphasis added). She then asks "why the sustained attack against women" (p. 134), as if it were obvious that such a thing has and is taking place.

An obvious common feature of the four talks by women published in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue is the impassioned expression of pain they feel over their presumed powerlessness. David Hume (1711–1776), the famous Scottish historian and philosopher, once wrote something about the politics of the power struggle he saw occasionally going on between men and women within marriages. Being a friend, as he says, to both women and truth, he felt obliged to give an accurate account of this struggle—one he felt harms both the married state and the larger community dependent upon it. (I warn the reader that Hume is being both playful and ironic, both of which are now quite out of fashion in discussions of so-called "women's issues." That is, Hume is not, as they now say, "politically correct.") According to Hume, he will
tell the women what it is that our sex complains of most in the married state; and if they be disposed to satisfy us in this particular, all other differences will easily be accommodated. If I be not mistaken, 'tis their love of dominion, which is the ground of the quarrel, tho' 'tis very likely, that they will think it an unreasonable love of it in us, which makes us insist so much upon the
point. However this may be, no passion seems to have more influence on female minds, than this for power.61

But he then added the much needed qualification: “But to be just, and to lay the blame more equally, I am afraid it is a fault of our sex, if the women be so fond of rule, and that if we did not abuse our authority, they would never think it worth while to dispute it.” And he added the following sage observation:

Tyrants, we know, produce rebels; and all history informs us, that rebels, when they prevail, are apt to become tyrants in their turn. For this reason, I could wish there were no pretensions to authority on either side; but that every thing was carried on with perfect equality, as between two equal members of the same body.62

If power is the issue, Hume has said much of what needs to be said.

“An Uncertain Sound”63

L. Jackson Newell64 created a minor commotion in 1985 when he strove, as he put it, to “marshal the forces” to battle against what he saw as a betrayal of some of his most cherished values65 by the leaders of the Church. He again couches his remarks in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue in a show of moral earnestness (pp. 31–39). But his emotional intensity over the issues

---

62 Ibid., 559–60.
63 This title is taken from 1 Corinthians 14:8: “For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”
64 L. Jackson Newell has recently accepted a temporary appointment as president of Deep Springs College in California, but will still teach at the University of Utah. With his wife, he once edited Dialogue.
65 See Newell, “An Echo from the Foothills: To Marshal the Forces of Reason,” Dialogue 19/1 (Spring 1986): 26–34. This is the published version of a talk, originally subtitled “To Marshal the Forces of Reason and Conscience,” that was presented on 21 November 1985 to the B. H. Roberts Society. An earlier version of Newell’s paper was read on 24 August 1985 to a Sunstone gathering in Salt Lake City.
he raises once again seems to have clouded his understanding and colored his judgment.

Some of Professor Newell’s moral idealism is difficult to dispute. Who does not at least claim to value the quest for knowledge and understanding? And, of course, I congratulate Newell in encouraging the freedoms that make that sort of thing possible. Who would want to oppose “liberty, justice, and equality” (p. 33), when these are properly understood? And who would oppose “peace, mercy and love”? (p. 33). But Newell now adds to his earlier complaints against the Church the charge that “by the summer of 1993 the Mormon church had become so immersed in its struggle to control free expression among its membership that it began to appear that nothing mattered as much as obedience and orthodoxy” (p. 33). The Church, he charges, “engaged in the conflict with such zeal that it bordered on obsession” as it moved against what he quaintly describes as “the intellectual, feminist, and homosexual communities” (p. 33). Then he sets out his own trendy political agenda, which he would like Latter-day Saints to follow.

However, as Newell sees it, the Church is too narrow, parochial, and conservative to take up his agenda. Why? “One of the difficulties of the Mormon world view is the belief that a divine plan exists” (p. 38). For Newell, “a humanist perspective is much more realistic about our human responsibility to respond to contemporary problems” (p. 38). But he seems to sense that something may be missing in the Kurtzian ideology, for he regards himself “as a Christian humanist—rather than a secular humanist—acknowledging that the broad ethics of Jesus, as distinct from the institutional church, have a powerful claim on [his] philosophy and actions” (p. 38). The problem with what Newell describes as “the institutional church” is that it causes its members to be “dangerously dependent on leaders rather than [allowing them] to think for themselves” (p. 38), which presumably is what he does frequently and well.

In 1986, when Newell began examining the relationships between authority and liberty, he issued what I consider a call to battle against the Brethren. The blind obedience and mind control

---

66 See Newell, “An Echo from the Foothills.”
which he mentioned in 1986 were simply a figment of his own imagination. He complained about "the increasing references to obedience as the first commandment, and the passing of free agency as a tangible LDS belief," without getting clear on the terms he employed or demonstrating that his charges were sound.67 There simply have not been unwholesome demands for obedience, blind or otherwise, linked to the responses of the Brethren to the ongoing controversy over, for example, the Mormon past.68 Could the leaders of the Church possibly imagine, as Newell seemed to claim in 1986, that they could control the sources of information or limit the scope of academic debate going on in the world generally? Would they want to, even if they could? All they can do is teach and admonish. So where is the repression and mind control? Should they not have the right to express their views? Perhaps Newell wants the Brethren to remain silent about threats confronting the Saints and the world generally simply because he disagrees with their views.

The Brethren have, of course, with tact and moderation set out their views and discreetly responded to dissidents and critics, which they have both a right and a moral obligation to do. And some dissidents have been disciplined for clearly justifiable reasons.69 These actions are not something new or despicable but

67 Ibid., 29.
68 Newell has complained about what he described as "the forced resignation from the LDS Church Translation Department in September 1985" of Stan Larson (ibid., 27). In defending Larson, Newell may also be indicating where he stands on the Book of Mormon. Newell does not confront the question of whether the Church should pay people to attack the Book of Mormon, and that seems to have been the issue involved in the employment of Stan Larson. The Church hardly needs to spend tithing money to guarantee that criticisms of the Book of Mormon appear in print, since people like those shadows of reality the Tanners, George Smith, and various others use their seemingly ample resources for that purpose.
69 By avoiding contact with local congregations while courting Church discipline, and then refusing to appear before a resulting disciplinary council, one dissident has been able to announce through the press the reasons he wants the public to consider as the grounds for his excommunication. See D. Michael Quinn, "Dilemmas of Feminists and Intellectuals in the Contemporary LDS Church." Sunstone 17/1 (June 1994): 68, 73. I suspect that Quinn has not been entirely forthcoming about his excommunication. Be that as it may, his remarks concerning his excommunication appear calculated to make him appear an heroic
part of the way the Church has operated from the beginning. And the remarks of the Brethren on, for example, the controversy over how best to tell the story of the Mormon past, are models of tolerance and careful reasoning, especially when compared to some of the stuff to which they are responding. In the final analysis the obligations of the Saints are self-imposed precisely because they rest on covenants made with God. And we are free to break those covenants, just as we are free to make them in the first place. In that sense only is obedience the way to Zion, a pure-in-heart community in which love abounds.

The Saints have, of course, had problems getting straight on questions of authority and hence we sometimes have abused legitimate liberties. But if we are to avoid such things—the lust for power, the resulting misuse of authority, whose blandishments we see around us—it will be by drawing upon the categories and norms internal to the faith, from prophetic wisdom rather than a denatured humanism shorn of a genuine trust in God. We hardly need the rhetoric provided by humanists to assist us in getting straight on these issues. Newell is eloquent about freedom, but during his tenure as editor at Dialogue the magazine gained a reputation as an outlet for his ideology. And he refused to allow a conversation in Dialogue over the soundness of that ideology. Manipulation and control of presses and the other public fora is hardly conducive to the open and presumably healthy exchange

---

70 See “An Echo from the Foothills,” 28, 33, for signs of Newell’s quarrel with Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder Russell M. Nelson.

71 For instance, there seems to have been an effort to prevent a critical discussion of what I have called revisionist Mormon history. Hume’s remarks, already quoted, about the tendency of rebels to become tyrants, when they have power, might be an appropriate commentary on such repressions of free and open discussion of crucial issues by erstwhile “liberals.”
of ideas, incidentally, something which his ideology seems to demand.

A genuine dialogue with naturalistic humanism might assist the Saints in sorting out the ways we must be distinguished from the larger world in which we live as aliens and strangers. But, if we turn to the wrong source for our direction and fundamental norms, we are bound to get it wrong and suffer the individual and collective consequences. And if we sometimes have problems handling authority, it is precisely because we have not given sufficient or careful attention to our scriptures. A candid look at the history of Mormonism will show that bad things follow when the Saints fail to take divine things seriously, and, as a result, end up not really understanding much about human things either.

If we turn to the Book of Mormon, we are continually faced with warnings against contention over doctrine, about community-destroying dissent—about carnality and lusts that turn the people of God into contending factions. Yet in 1986, with a reference to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, Newell strove to justify the creation of contention over our history and doctrine within the household of faith. The Saints need to stand together against the evils that abound in the world, but obviously that form of unity must be entirely voluntary. And all the Brethren can do is admonish—their work is through persuasion and long suffering. The picture in the Book of Mormon of the people of God approaching Zion is of a people who freely choose to trust God and obey the covenants they have made. We hardly need the rhetoric of a naturalistic humanism to chart the course or set the agenda. Obviously our relationships with God presuppose moral agency and a freely chosen duty to God. We are not called to obedience to mere whims. Furthermore, the same terms and conditions apply to all the Saints, including those who are called to preside.

Neither Newell's 1986 paper nor the talk he contributed to A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue constitutes a careful exegesis of the texts appropriate to the questions he raises or a coherent account of our current situation. Instead, he marshals forces to fight against the essentially imaginary evil he projects upon our leaders.

---

72 Newell, "An Echo from the Foothills," 27, 32.
And he sets out to arm a faction with battle slogans borrowed for the most part from a corrupt secular culture. It was against exactly that sort of thing that Elder Hugh B. Brown—ironically one of Newell’s idols—thought that we need the protection afforded by a well-developed critical capacity.73

The struggle against secular ideologies that challenge the people of God cannot effectively take place if the foundations of faith are jettisoned by those who have appropriated the categories and explanations of competing secular ideologies. When something like that point is made, Newell seems to assume that he has found evidence of a lack of confidence in critical inquiry. But he has gotten this wrong, for we need more careful inquiry precisely in order not to fall prey to every trendy slogan and intellectual fad and fashion that comes down the pike.

Other than the charge that the Brethren have begun a campaign of repression by, for example, not remaining entirely passive when faced with attacks on the historical foundations of the faith from without and increasingly seductive revisionist statements from within, Newell does not really address the question of freedom within the community of faith. What he does not see is that there must be certain voluntary limitations on the freedom of individuals within the Church in order to avoid falling into the anarchy of contending factions. These legitimate limitations are placed upon the Saints by, among other things, the duty to manifest Christian love and forgiveness, as well as by simple matters of taste and tact, and above all by the content of the covenant that binds the Saints to God. Newell has not shown that such self-imposed restraints—and in the end these are the only kind that are available to the people of God—place any burden on a genuine quest for knowledge and understanding.

Newell draws a picture of the leaders of the Church who, he claims, are in a kind of frenzy brought on by the assaults of influential enemies on both the moral discipline and the historical foundations of the faith. In 1986, he saw their anxiety extending merely to a “perceived threat” or a “seeming threat” from vulgar and gossipy journalists or those I label revisionist Mormon

historians. In 1986 he granted that this response of the Brethren was “well-intentioned,” but still mistaken. But he also admitted that the faith is in danger from attacks directed against its historical foundations. He granted that “the well-financed and sophisticated attacks of anti-Mormons . . . seek to undermine the foundations of the Church and destroy the faith of its members.” So apparently something that has been taking place constitutes a genuine threat. Hence the question is not whether there is a threat but what and who constitutes that threat.

What Newell will not admit is that the Brethren may be correct in noting a few wolves at work among the flock. He also objects to their taking note of the consequences of the appropriation of various fashionable explanations of the historical foundations of the faith such as the notion that the Book of Mormon is frontier fiction fashioned by Joseph Smith out of his immediate environment. Newell insists that such accounts constitute only a “seeming threat” and hence are not a real threat at all. His identification of this so-called “seeming threat” is instructive. “The seeming threat is to the historical and spiritual foundations of the faith, the authenticity of traditional accounts of Joseph’s visions [this was before Hofmann’s forgeries were uncovered], and the origins of the Book of Mormon.” It is not clear, however, how this mere “seeming threat” differs from the “attacks on the Church” made by “well-financed . . . anti-Mormons.” From my perspective, they are distinguished only by the degree of sophistication and the candor of the authors, and perhaps partially (but not entirely) by the source of their financial support.

In 1986 Newell seemed concerned that there would eventually be casualties among dissidents as the controversy he pictured continues. He was concerned that “those who harbor legitimate doubts,” whatever that means, and the uncommitted might be “made to feel unworthy or unwelcome” under the current regimen. But the Church cannot be expected to oversee its own destruction or authorize the use of its resources to spread the poison of doubt and unbelief among the Saints merely because it

74 Newell, “An Echo from the Foothills,” 32.
75 Ibid., 26.
76 Ibid., 32.
77 Ibid., 33.
must and obviously does have a deep concern for those troubled ones on the fringes or those with doubts. Should a concern for the sensitivities of a few doubters and uncommitted allow attacks on the foundations of the faith to go unanswered? Newell has been silent on such issues.

There are those who now attempt to manipulate or beat others into submission with skillfully orchestrated political statements and public relations stunts—the "olive branch," "circle of love," and candle-light vigils by dissidents being an example—which are clearly intended to embarrass the Church and polarize the Saints. Such endeavors are obviously not building Zion. And to picture the Church as filled with mindless robots is a bizarre caricature. Whatever the problems that confront the Saints on the delicate questions of freedom and authority, Newell's assessments have been a disservice even to the cause he defends. The people of God have been, on balance, tolerant and even forgiving of doubts, heresies, and even instances of outright apostasy. For example, Vern Bullough reports that "in the past the Mormon church was slow to excommunicate ordinary members who did not threaten the church directly" (p. 69).

However, Bullough thinks that "in recent decades church leaders have become more aggressive in threatening excommunication" (p. 70). In an item announcing the 1993 Humanist/Mormon Dialogue, Bullough explained to the readers of Free Inquiry that Brigham Young University is faced with "growing problems" because "part of the uniqueness of the Latter Day Saints [sic], as they call themselves, is that the Mormon church lacks a professional clergy." And "Mormon officials" see that "any deviant member poses a threat, and the target in recent years has come to be the church-controlled religious institutions, of which BYU is the most influential." And

BYU aspires to become a leader in American higher education, and it has managed to attract some distinguished scholars. This is a source of conflict because religious orthodoxy and the intellectual freedom necessary for higher education are simply contradictory components.
Part of the trouble is that much of the Mormon doctrine was set in terms of nineteenth-century American ideology and times have changed.  

He assumes that believers must adapt to the shifting ideological sands of their times. In support of these claims, Bullough charges that Cecilia K. Farr and David C. Knowlton were “denied tenure”—which is simply not true, since they never reached that point in the review process—because they challenged “the hierarchy.” As a result, “many of the faculty members who belong to the Sunstone group, a liberal Mormon group, or contribute to the journal Dialogue feel threatened. But how does change come about,” he asks, “if internal critics are silenced?” And, in reasoning rivaling some of the more wanton outbursts of D. Michael Quinn or Lavina F. Anderson, Bullough charges that there is currently “a wave of excommunications second to none in Mormon history, emphasizing that BYU is not so much the university it claimed but simply a sectarian seminary.” It is, however, not clear what rather routine disciplinary actions taken against five apostates has to do with Brigham Young University.

Even when Newell touches on real problems, his passion tends to get in the way of a calm, balanced, well-informed assessment of conditions in Mormon culture. In his eyes the Brethren have capitulated to irrationalism, abandoned the belief in moral agency, and turned the Church into a fortress armed to fight merely imaginary evils. Through the use of such curious and inaccurate political rhetoric, Newell has drawn a picture of a sinister threat that has its focus in the leadership of the Church, and certainly

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., 9-10.
82 In 1986, speculation on political mass movements introduced Newell’s charges against the Brethren. In his estimation, all mass movements are in some degree evil, but some may be beneficial if they repress greater evils. That sets the stage for his claim that the Brethren, in a panic, have created an immoral mass movement in an effort to deal with what they falsely believe is a crisis. Newell seems not to have asked why the Brethren should be concerned about what is taught and believed about the scriptures and the Mormon past. And hence he seems certain that there is no justification for their concerns on these issues because all we have is the publication of essentially harmless treatments.
not a threat flowing from the work of his friends and associates. Such rhetoric is often used to force a choice between equally unsatisfactory alternatives. Either one must choose irrationality and mindless authoritarian conformity and obedience without moral restraint or one must follow the path of humanist enlightenment and the abandonment of the historical foundations of the faith. Are those the only alternatives? There must be a middle ground between such extremes. Newell has in mind a different middle ground—what he calls "the reasonable middle ground where belief flourishes in open country, and doubt and commitment exist comfortably on the same landscape."

Newell draws from a talk by Elder Hugh B. Brown the expression "freedom of the mind." But the crucial freedom that Elder Brown had in mind was grounded in and flowed from a commitment to the fundamentals of the restored gospel. He warned BYU students of the consequences of mindless adherence to slogans and ideologies that are soul and community destroying. And in that talk Elder Brown testified of his own knowledge that "Jesus of Nazareth is and was and will ever be the Son of God, the Redeemer and Savior of the world." Nothing could be further from the credo of naturalistic humanism.

Newell, like George Smith and others, holds that the Brethren, in their zeal to control the Saints "by demands for blind obedience," have silently abandoned the belief that we are responsible moral agents, a belief central to the Mormon understanding of man and God. But, unlike some cultural Mormons, the Brethren have not abandoned the belief that we are free to choose between liberty and eternal life and captivity and death. Why? Because the Book of Mormon is still in place in the Church, even if it has recently fallen on hard times among a few on the fringes of the Mormon academic community. When that text is brushed aside as the frontier fiction of a pious but ignorant rustic or as a con-

---

83 There is, of course, no middle ground on the question of whether Joseph Smith was or was not a genuine prophet of God.
84 Newell, "An Echo from the Foothills," 32–33.
sciously contrived fraud or whatever the revisionist accounts attempt to make it out to be, then and only then have its teachings lost their authority. So it turns out that a defense of the historical foundations of the faith is necessary in order to preserve the norms that Newell tries to invoke.

Some of the more alienated on the fringes of the Mormon academic community—among whom are several recruited by George Smith as part of his “dialogue” with humanists—seem to insist that we have a choice between following blindly the dictates of irrational leaders or being dissident, contentious, and critical. They want us to believe that faith and the obedience to God that flows from it are merely emotional or sentimental, as they set themselves up as the proponents of rationality, and “free inquiry.” To see things in these terms is to misunderstand the alternatives and to confuse the issues. There is no worthy sacrifice offered to God that is not done by moral agents operating in the clear light of the day.

**Cultural Mormons and the Neglect of the Book of Mormon**

Allen Dale Roberts, currently one of the editors of *Dialogue*, is known for his having been involved in the production of an account of the Hofmann Affair. He is also known for his recent criticisms of the Church. So it is not surprising that he appeared on the Smith/Kurtz program and that his talk appears in *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*. In this talk Roberts attacks both Brigham Young University and the Church by describing what he sees as the limitations placed on believing Latter-day Saints—which presumably impinge on the necessary academic ambiance, as he understands such things, that is needed by a genuine univer-

---

86 The other “coeditor” is Martha S. Bradley, and the assistant editor is Gary James Bergera, who works for George Smith at Signature Books. All three of these people have essays that appear in the pages of George Smith’s *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*.


sity. These limitations are, for Roberts, at the root of the controversy over academic freedom at BYU. First, the Brethren are old, and hence "the leadership, which tightly controls the academic environment at BYU, remains entrenched in old thinking" (p. 53). And we know that "old thinking," or thinking by those who are old, is bad. Right? And, Roberts charges, these old fellows claim infallibility. (This is, of course, a ludicrous charge.)

In addition, Roberts also claims that "perhaps the single most intellectually confining idea in Mormonism is its belief that it is the only 'true church.' I believe," he explains, "that any exclusive claim to truth is antithetical to the freedom of thought needed in life generally and in the academy in particular" (p. 53). He neglects to explain why he holds such opinions. And yet some things believed by Latter-day Saints might perhaps be true. What really galls Roberts is the Church as an organizational structure. But certainly when Latter-day Saints talk about a true Church, they have in mind the restored gospel and not a bureaucracy.

Roberts has more to say about what he sees as limitations. Consider the following: "Similarly Mormons are limited by their belief in scriptural literalism." He also charges, as I have shown, that Latter-day Saints refuse to accept the findings of scholarly work, since, in his opinion, "modern multi-disciplinary scholarship has shown the Book of Mormon to be a nineteenth-century product rather than an ancient document as claimed by Joseph Smith" (p. 52). Oh it has? That matter has been settled? This unsupported assertion about the Book of Mormon is then followed by an apologia for David P. Wright,89 who left Brigham Young University

89 Allen Dale Roberts claims that it was "admitted that [David P. Wright] never taught these unorthodox views to his students. He was fired solely on the basis of his personal and privately-held beliefs." But are not all beliefs in some sense personal and private? And who exactly "admitted" that Wright did not communicate his opinions to others? Wright's students were reporting his presumably "privately-held beliefs" accurately soon after he arrived at Brigham Young University. And he soon began circulating a paper in which he set forth his opinions on the Bible and other Latter-day Saint scriptures. See his "Historicity and Faith: A Personal View of the Meaning of Scripture," an eleven-page draft of a paper Wright prepared for delivery at the Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium in August 1987. By describing his clearly heretical opinions as "a personal view," Wright and others—for example, Roberts—seem to think that he has thereby somehow insulated himself from responsibility for holding those
and was later excommunicated for his view that the Book of Mormon is nineteenth-century fiction. After his apologia for David P. Wright's heretical opinions, Roberts then claims that "another intellectually limiting Mormon belief is the myth of absolute and unchanging doctrine" (p. 53).

This is an issue worthy of further examination. Roberts seems convinced that Latter-day Saint beliefs have nothing approaching stability, even on the most fundamental issues. In this instance, unlike his opinion on the historicity of the Book of Mormon, he provides what he considers "proof." He claims that Thomas G. Alexander has "put to rest the myth that Mormon theology is constant and unchanging by showing the evolution of basic doctrines of God and humankind" (p. 53). According to Roberts, Professor Alexander showed that Mormons have understood and worshipped different gods at different times. The godhead Mormons think of now is entirely different in character than the divinity worshipped by early Mormons. Moreover, Mormonism's unchangeable doctrines are changing as we speak. The infusion of ideas from protestant neo-orthodoxy theology is a recent example. (p. 53)

When Roberts opines that Latter-day Saints have "received an infusion of ideas from protestant neo-orthodoxy," and also that their beliefs concerning God are in flux, he seems to be drawing upon the opinions of three authors, Thomas G. Alexander, whom he mentions, and Sterling M. McMurrin and O. Kendall White, Jr., who are not mentioned. But Alexander and even White claim opinions. Sterling M. McMurrin now handles the matter of his having held heretical views while employed by the Church Education System as an Institute of Religion teacher and director much more frankly. "I should," he reported in 1984, "have been more forthcoming in revealing my heresies, such as my disbelieving in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon"; see "An Interview with Sterling McMurrin," Dialogue 17/1 (Spring 1984): 26.


91 For a criticism of this notion, see my essay entitled "A Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy Challenges Cultural Mormon Neglect of the Book of Mormon: Some
that contemporary Latter-day Saints have taken over much from Protestant theology. Instead, they seem to argue that the current emphasis on the Book of Mormon and stress on the atonement of Jesus Christ is analogous to something that went on in European Protestant circles after World War I when Karl Barth turned against Cultural Protestantism. I suspect that Roberts has misunderstood Alexander’s intentions.

Roberts also insists that the Church hides the truth from its members (p. 54). And it excommunicates those who tell the truth. “More than ever before,” Roberts charges, “Mormon leaders are intolerant of unfriendly truths” (p. 53), and “using truth to expose abuse is what Lavina Fielding Anderson did. It resulted in her excommunication” (p. 54). A more truthful way of describing Lavina F. Anderson’s action would be to say that she abused truth by claiming that Church leaders at all levels are involved in a conspiracy of some sort against intellectuals, by which she meant a very few dissident historians, radical feminists, and homosexuals. To claim that her charges are the truth is to accept her account of matters that by their very nature are confidential, open to various interpretations, and often simply inaccurately reported both by the media and by the dissidents themselves. When one relies upon newspaper accounts of anything, and especially that which pertains to the Church, one is at risk of getting it all wrong. And when one only listens to dissidents, one gets only one side on complex and complicated issues.

But the charge that the Church and its leaders are fearful of what Roberts calls “the truth” rests on his having confused “truth” with accepting the views of the uninformed, of dissidents, or publicity seekers and so forth (p. 54). And yet he grants that “the church is not without cause in harboring these fears” of such people. Why? His explanation is instructive. “Since its founding,” he reports, “it has lost members who have learned uncomfortable truths about leaders, practices, doctrine and history. Some have been lost to the influences of secularism, rationalism, positivism, socialism, and other worldly competitors of Mormonism” (p. 55). Presumably all of these fit squarely within his

category of "uncomfortable truths." But why must we assume that all these various "isms" and many more that could be included are, in fact, true? At best they merely make competing claims to being true.

Roberts then claims that "a humanist would say that any person has the right and duty to explore all of these options and select the best from among them. Mormon leaders would argue that their duty is to hide these confusing truths from the members who are childlike and weak and will be eaten by ravening wolves if not protected" (p. 55). But Roberts is confused—no one would deny that every person has the right to inquire and choose. Could he be claiming that the playing field is always level when these uncomfortable, confusing, and competing claims to possess "the truth" tangle with each other and the gospel of Jesus Christ? One only has to examine a recent issue of Dialogue, one he has edited, to see that a bias is present, giving a spin to what is included in its pages. And one suspects that something approaching a systematic institutional censorship is now in place at Dialogue. But this is true in every forum, is it not? Or do we still cling to the myth of objectivity? The answer is yes, at least for some.

Roberts celebrates objectivity, whatever that may be. "The conservative religious agenda tends to limit attempts at objectivity. Objectivity," he claims, "is one of those highly-touted but rarely achieved goals" (p. 57). One wonders whether he considers Dialogue to be objective? I wonder whether Roberts has given attention to the conversation that has been going on in Mormon academic circles over the possibility and desirability of objectivity.92 And if not, why not? I suspect that Roberts might find himself made uncomfortable by the conversation.

Roberts blasts away at what appear to him to be misplaced efforts to support the restored gospel at Brigham Young University. One of his examples is instructive. He reports that "BYU pro-

---

fessor of anthropology Ray T. Matheny concluded in a 1984 paper entitled ‘Book of Mormon Archeology’ that there is no archaeological basis to support the Book of Mormon as ancient Mesoamerican. His scores of convincing examples are too lengthy to mention here. The fact that he was warned not to speak again in public on this issue is the salient point” (p. 58). The curious reader might ask: by whom was Matheny warned? And what might have been the content of this warning? And how does Roberts know about such presumably confidential matters? And exactly why is an unsubstantiated charge—a mere rumor—“the salient point”? And why did Roberts not report the contents of a letter written by Matheny in which he emphatically denies that the views he expressed in his paper in 1984 represent his opinion on the Book of Mormon? In this letter, Matheny seems to claim that all he was doing in 1984 was responding to a question handed to him on a card by someone at a Sunstone session in which he thought he would merely be a discussant. And that card asked him to explain how a non-Mormon archaeologist might assess the Book of Mormon. Hence, he was not presenting or setting forth his own views on the matter. And is Roberts sure that Matheny once intended to publish his seemingly rather casual remarks? If not, why all the fuss?

Finally, Roberts charges that “careful surveillance of all student and faculty activities” takes place at Brigham Young University” (p. 59). He then refers to “secret monitoring with intent to harm” (p. 59), mentioning a real instance that once took place during Ernest L. Wilkinson’s stint as President of Brigham Young University (p. 59)—which ended in 1971. But to charge, as Roberts does, that anyone connected with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, for example, has been involved in “secretly monitoring colleagues and church members at large, collecting verbal and written information on what they consider to be questionable or unorthodox activity” (p. 59) is simply false. It is outrageous for Roberts—an editor of a magazine—to make such unsubstantiated charges and to allow them to

---

be published. Unfortunately, in his zest to blast Brigham Young University, Roberts indulges in much similar and related gossip. And it is gossip that is nasty and vengeful. One wonders how such gossip was allowed to appear in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue.

There are other instances of false or unsubstantiated charges in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue. Take the following as an example: Gary James Bergera claims that "the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), an offshoot of SEHA and NWAF, has produced a growing collection on interdisciplinary defenses of Book of Mormon historicity based on [John L.] Sorenson’s speculations" (p. 105). Whatever else one might think of Bergera’s characterization of FARMS, at least it is certain that FARMS was not in any way the offshoot of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology (SEHA), nor was it the offshoot of the New World Archaeological Foundation (NWAF). Such a bizarre claim is the equivalent of asserting that Signature Books is the offshoot of the Utah Lighthouse Ministry—something no one believes.

**Anti-Mormon Bigotry and So-Called “Academic Freedom”**

Some interesting bits of gossip are to be found in F. Ross Peterson’s personal reminiscences entitled “Tenure as a Tool” (pp. 87–92). Peterson reports that various dissidents left Brigham Young University in “the early 1950s and 1960s” (p. 88) and moved to Utah State University. These included “J. Golden Taylor, Thorton Y. Booth, Brigham D. Madsen, and Carlton Culmsee.” According to Peterson, “they blasted the LDS church in their daily classes” (p. 88). (They moved to Logan, incidentally, because they found Provo “inhospitable,” according to Peterson.) And in Logan they joined people like George C. Jensen94 and Heber C. Snell (a dissident refugee from the Church

94 Peterson reports that “Jensen, a returned Mormon missionary to Germany, became disaffected and so as he aged evolved toward sacrilege. He loved to give sacred Mormon temple signs while shaking hands and say other things that upset students and faculty” (p. 88). But, since he had tenure and there was wanton “academic freedom” at Utah State University, he was apparently perfectly free to mock the faith of others. He persisted, even though his antics had nothing to do
Education System), who “were harsh, sarcastic, and cynical so far as religious-sponsored education was concerned” (p. 88). In other words, at Utah State University they were free to blast away at their former faith. What all of this has to do with Peterson’s topic remains more or less a mystery. But it is still interesting stuff. And it suggests an important question.

Are there or should there be limits to what goes on in a university? I think that there should be. And Peterson eventually reports that there are at least some limits, for “a thorough analysis reveals that each institution creates its own criteria for retaining teachers” (p. 88). And institutions supported by churches have a right to tailor those criteria to suit their own ends, for, according to Peterson, “frankly, private institutions can do what they want” (p. 91). Then he notes that Brigham Young University has set in place criteria that do not strictly conform to “traditional academic freedom” (p. 91). What that means is that George Jensen’s or Heber Snell’s antics would presumably not have been tolerated at Brigham Young University, or at least they would not now be tolerated, though they might have been prior to World War II. But why should they be? It is a wonder that they were tolerated in Logan. Peterson seems inclined to quarrel with efforts of the Church to protect the students under its charge in the Church Education System and at Brigham Young University from indoctrination by people not committed to the restored gospel. Hence he notes that people like the late Obert C. Tanner and Sterling M. McMurrin were sacrificed “in order to maintain theological

with his teaching appointment or research. There are numerous examples of what we might now begin to call the “Jensen Syndrome” all along the Wasatch Front, where it is not uncommon to find a battle going on between cultural Mormons and the faithful in which efforts are made in and out of the classroom to justify the disbeliefs of dissidents, and to ridicule the sincere faith of others. What is called “academic freedom” presumably protects such antics. But the faithful do not seem to enjoy such a promiscuous “academic freedom,” for they are in part restrained by the demands of good taste, but also by the restraints placed informally on their freedom in an academic setting, especially along the Wasatch Front. There is some delicious irony in all of this. It is amusing to see dissidents attempting to empower themselves and their ideology while silencing and mocking their opponents by mouthing slogans about “academic freedom.”
orthodoxy" (p. 92). "Sacrifice" is too strong a word, since they merely moved on to other things, which they were free to do.95

Professor Peterson’s remarks about affairs long ago in Logan are matched by Frederick S. Buchanan’s rumination about affairs at the University of Utah. He reports that “the University of Utah has its own set of problems. It is almost impossible for a devout Mormon to find employment in many departments” (p. 83). He describes this as an “unwritten exclusionary policy” (p. 83) and goes on to explain why it may happen, without addressing the issue of the religious bigotry it manifests. Should not faithful Latter-day Saints have equal access to public institutions? Should they not also have full academic freedom at places like the University of Utah? We must ask whether their faith should function openly or covertly to exclude them from employment in public institutions of higher learning.

But we may contrast Buchanan’s admission that there is what he calls an “unwritten exclusionary policy” at the University of Utah that makes it “almost impossible for a devout Mormon to find employment in many departments” with the rather more sanguine opinion once expressed by Sterling M. McMurrin. In 1984 he opined that “the University of Utah is as free a university from the standpoint of academic freedom as one can expect to find anywhere in this country or in the world.”96 But it may not be free for faithful Latter-day Saints (as contrasted with cultural Mormons). Indeed, portions of the University of Utah may also be free from believing Latter-day Saints. One can be excused for wondering whether this is what is meant by some who celebrate unfettered academic freedom. Be that as it may, according to McMurrin,

of course, there are limitations in all institutions. There are limitations which a qualified instructor should impose upon himself [and herself?]—such things as not using the classroom as a podium for any kind of political propaganda, or exercising genuine propriety in matters pertaining to moral conduct, and good

95 Sterling M. McMurrin, “Obert C. Tanner: Symbol of Freedom, Sun-
96 “An Interview with Sterling McMurrin,” 24.
judgment in treating issues that are locally very sensitive. Those who lack the judgment and sense of responsibility necessary to impose both moral and intellectual standards upon themselves have no business teaching in a university or any other kind of school.97

This language would seem to justify a university setting in place procedures for review and perhaps removing faculty who simply will not impose upon themselves the necessary moral and intellectual restraints. And McMurrin also admitted that private institutions like Brigham Young University "are free from the imposition of some pressures that public institutions must contend with."98 Whatever else one might think about McMurrin’s opinions, at least in this instance his views seem rather distant from the diatribe aimed at Brigham Young University over the issue of academic freedom by various contributors to the Smith/Kurtz volume.

But given the Smith/Kurtz agenda, one wonders why the slip by Buchanan about anti-Mormon bigotry at the University of Utah was allowed to stand, since it flies in the face of the rhetoric about “freedom” that was trumpeted as the foundation of university life and then used as a weapon against Brigham Young University in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue. Could it be that secular universities have or perhaps need their own kinds of limits? And is it not also likely that certain limits actually enhance freedom and well-being? In a similar vein, Vern Bullough grants that even humanists have their own problems (p. 71). “Sometimes I almost wish we could excommunicate some who call themselves humanists,” he mused (p. 71).

Vern Bullough claims that the “use of excommunication to control dissent is like an alcoholic taking the first drink” (p. 71). I wonder whether the protection seemingly afforded to anti-Mormon bigotry in the name of so-called “academic freedom” might fit better into his analogy of the alcoholic. Certain comments by F. Ross Peterson concerning such matters at Utah State University suggest that it might. At some point, if justice and equity mean anything in our community, we may need a legally

---

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
mandated affirmative action program to advance and also protect believing Latter-day Saints in public institutions, especially along the Wasatch Front. And we may need legal protection against manifestations of offensive religious bigotry aimed at Latter-day Saint students and faculty in public institutions in Utah. Bigots may yet discover that anti-Mormonism—the currently fashionable manifestation of bigotry—is merely a socially acceptable analogue of virulent anti-Semitism. As such it runs against the grain of morally (if not, currently, at least in the case of bigotry directed at Latter-day Saints, legally) permissible behavior.

Finally, what are we to think of a professor of humanities—Robert S. Alley—who makes the following rather innocuous statement and allows it to go into print: "James Madison spoke of the danger of democracy as the 'tyranny of the majority'" (p. 14)? Madison was a great man and had many fine ideas. And the notion that democracy is in danger from the "tyranny of the majority" is an interesting and often discussed possibility. But it was Alexis de Tocqueville in his Democracy in America, and not James Madison, who described the threat of a "tyranny of the majority." And might we not begin to see just such a tyranny at work in some departments at such places as the University of Utah, where Frederick S. Buchanan claims there is an "unwritten exclusionary policy" in place that keeps out faithful Latter-day Saints?

Naturalistic Humanism—A Closer Look

Perhaps the most serious deficiency in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue is that it lacks a serious discussion of what is at stake in

the confrontation between genuine Latter-day Saint faith and naturalistic humanism. Hence, whatever else one might say about it, the book is superficial. This deficiency could have been at least partly rectified if something by Sterling McMurrin had been included. Hence, in an effort to be helpful, I offer the following as a compendium of his opinions on naturalistic humanism, taken from a collection of his essays entitled *Religion, Reason, and Truth*.\(^{100}\) My interjections are included in brackets.

[McMurrin asks whether there should] be a return to the fundamentalism which substitutes the authority of creeds for the autonomy of reason, legend for history, and myth for science? Or, with the humanists, is one to declare religion in the traditional sense a remnant of the past, pleasant in certain respects, but untrue, and unfitted either to the intellect of modern man or to the manifold practical problems to which he must now turn himself in the new spirit of science?\(^{101}\)

To abandon all vestiges of the traditional faith and settle for a naturalistic humanism is a more inviting alternative; the atmosphere, if thinner, is yet purer, and the call to thought and action clear and definitive. *But humanism is a denial of the highest hope of the human heart, a confession . . . that the voice of god which men had so often strained to hear was nothing but the ghostly echo of their own feeble and despairing cries*.\(^{102}\)

[Is there no meaning to life, other than what humans give it? McMurrin’s answer:] the individual person alone exists—exists to hope in vain, to suffer in anguish, and to die to annihilation.\(^{103}\)

---


\(^{101}\) Ibid., 78–79.

\(^{102}\) Ibid., 79, emphasis added.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., 274.
For the strict naturalistic humanist believes that there is no God and there is no immortal soul. His ultimate pessimism is his denial that there is an ultimate. For him the proximate world exhausts the whole of reality and existence. There is no cosmic purpose, no genuinely telic process, no center of absolute meaning for the world and for man. There is no superhuman moral power that judges the thoughts and actions of men, no world spirit that moves their history, that seeks the triumph of righteousness, guarantees an ultimate justice, or comforts with an all-forgiving love.\textsuperscript{104}

But for the humanist there is no God, there is no savior, no redemption, and man is alone in the world. But it is a world of which he is genuinely a part and in which he is at home.\textsuperscript{105}

The strength of the humanist religion \textsuperscript{1} is its supreme commitment to reason, its faith in man’s creative intelligence—faith that he has the power to discern, articulate, and solve his problems. The humanist is confident that under the guidance of good will the patient processes of scientific thought may eventually win through the amelioration of society and the achievement of human happiness.\textsuperscript{106}

\footnotesize{[What McMurrin calls “liberalism” is] defined in terms of reason, creativeness, and the positive worth of man which has been under fire in our century. As an optimistic faith in the perfectibility of human nature and human society it received a death blow in Europe at the hands of the First World War. The comfortable circumstances of America’s middle class sustained it in this country for more than a decade, but with the economic depression of the thirties and the Second War, together with the more recent wars and the disheartening failures attending the efforts to establish the peace,}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 94, emphasis in original.  
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 95.}
it has suffered a severe disintegration. We have been losing that faith in ourselves and in our powers of reason to discover and solve our problems which for some time appeared to be a chief glory of modern occidental culture. 

[The] humanists, who had surrendered entirely the basic categories of traditional religion, abandoning faith in God in favor of a naturalistic interpretation of man and his universe, cultivated an even more positive and aggressive program of human action. They, with the general though indirect support of secularized public education, made a vigorous appeal to the liberals to accept the conclusions of their own logic, muster the courage of their convictions, and declare themselves free from the religion of the past which still held them in its embrace.

Liberalism with its optimistic faith in man was shallow and superficial in its failure to recognize the egoism, selfishness, and sinfulness which characterize human nature, its happy hopes for human society were naive failures to face the political and social realities which now are so evident to all; its easy doctrine of progress was the pleasant illusion that good will, education, and the sciences could deliver men from the social evils that must take their toll in bloody suffering.

The life-affirming optimism of Humanism is not unlike that of Liberalism. Indeed, just as many liberals are on the borderline of Orthodoxy, many are near the boundaries of Humanism, for Humanism, though having an ancient tradition of its own, results in modern times from the same positive forces that produce Liberalism; and as the children of the orthodox may be liberals, their grandchildren may be humanists.
We were also told that optimism is unwarranted. Why? The reason is that the humanist is inclined toward contempt for what he regards as the liberal's lack of courage, the courage to assert his freedom from the bondage of pre-scientific thought by abandoning every vestige of cosmic supernaturalism, by breaking the bonds that tie him sentimentally and morally to the forms of the past. The liberal, he believes, is attempting the futile task of rationalizing an outmoded theology in terms of a modern world view with which it is totally incompatible. The humanists join the neo-orthodox in convicting the liberals of professing a Christian faith while at the same time abandoning those very beliefs in redemption which have made Christianity a world religion and which throughout its history have been the chief source of its strength.111

Humanists and liberals seem to share the same illusions. How does McMurrin attempt to resolve this quandary?] As a religion Humanism enjoins men to engage in the moral struggle to create the highest values. But it is a struggle that can know only momentary victory, for the universe is totally indifferent to man and his moral aspiration. Everyone must die; after a brief moment the race will perish and the drama of humanity will be ended without the slightest trace or memory that it ever began.112

Some humanists are acutely conscious of the ultimate tragedy of human existence and their philosophy is characterized by sadness and melancholy.113

What is the point of having faith in man? Why is humanism optimistic?] Humanism has a quality of tragic heroism. Its tragic character is its belief that there is no ultimate meaning in human existence, that men must struggle alone to create and support their world of

111 Ibid., 105.
112 Ibid., 95.
113 Ibid.
values, and that someday they all will die and everything they have created will die with them. The heroism of humanism is that believing this dreadful thing to be true, men will yet struggle valiantly to create such a world and conserve it for others yet unborn, and that even the heartbreaking disappointments of the past decades have not completely disillusioned them. For Humanism grounds its philosophy in an uncompromising denial that morality requires a theistic sanction or that secularism in principle is inimical to the full pursuit of high personal and social values. Mortals, it declares, can and should be cultivated independently of belief in God. A person should be moral for no other reason than that he is a human being.  

Man is born of nature and belongs to nature. His life is a part of its life; his values are its values. Though blindly and unconsciously, and with no intent or purpose, nature has yet conspired to produce him, his creations, his culture. This life is all, but there is nothing to regret—for it is enough. The moral injunction is to live it fully and abundantly, and when the times comes to leave it, to die stoically, with resignation and without complaint. 

[Why not “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die”?] It is the fate of the humanists to be judged by their disbelief in God rather than by their faith in man, and the condemnation is most rigorous from the camp of those who have abundant faith in God but little or no faith in man. This is the injustice of judging men by their disbeliefs without inquiring into their beliefs. It is not atheism but the positive affirmation of life and human values that lies at the heart of Humanism. 

---

114 Ibid.. 105–6.
115 Ibid., 95.
116 Ibid., 107.
Now the life of the humanist is not devoid, because of his naturalistic philosophy, of moral and spiritual value. Like those who believe in God, he loves his wife and cherishes the fondest hopes for his children, he is concerned for the well-being of his fellowmen; like the theists, in his heroic moment he will give his life for another; he gazes upon the same art as they, communes with the same nature—his spirit uplifted by the same music, his will steeled by the same high resolve, his life shattered by the same tragedies. Atheism does not make the humanist morally bad; it cultivates in him the cosmic loneliness of those who believe that their only companions in life and death are their fellowmen and the mute-world which has unknowingly cast them up, and will unknowingly reclaim them. 117

Humanism denies that there are uniquely religious experiences and refuses to distinguish between the sacred and the secular. It declares instead that religious experience embraces every worthwhile human attitude and activity. . . . Man is the primary object of its interest and devotion. Its instruments are science and democracy, and its goal is the good life. 118

Nothing will dispose of an optimistic philosophy of history more readily than a good look at the mean facts of history. The world quite obviously is not the pleasant, forward-moving affair we once believed it to be. 119

[What is there in humanism that might support a mood of optimism without some illusions about the course of history thrown in as a consolation?] When we come right down to it and insist on being honest with ourselves, for those of us whose passion for reason and reliable knowledge has robbed us of our enchantments it appears that about all that is left is some kind of reverent naturalism. Not the bad type of naturalism that

117 Ibid., 94.
118 Ibid., 95.
119 Ibid., 279.
was formerly called materialism and seemed to deny the reality of much that is of greatest value, but the good type that is usually called naturalistic humanism, or something like that; the type of naturalism that makes a place, and a large place, for mind and moral values and for spiritual aspiration and commitment and insists that these are as real a part of nature as are matter and physical events. This naturalism can generate an authentic piety and reverence for life. And it can enable an individual to invest life with purpose and meaning.\textsuperscript{120}

[McMurrin grants that] to reflect honestly on ourselves and our world must inevitably make us sad; because, with all its beauties and joys it obviously is not a very good world; for every beauty there is ugliness, and for every joy a plenitude of suffering and despair. We can do little more than face the tragedy of life courageously, intelligently.\textsuperscript{121}

[We should have courage in the face of ultimate meaninglessness. There is, however, still one last fragment of hope that remains: for] the most precious hope for those of us who have failed to see that the cosmos is really on our side is the hope that our failure is a fault of our own finite knowledge and understanding and our lack of faith and that in some inscrutable way the world will ultimately vindicate the longings of the heart as well as justify the reasons of the mind.\textsuperscript{122}

\textbf{Religion without Illusions and Genuine Consolations}

Sterling McMurrin is perhaps best known for a long and distinguished career as an educational administrator at the University of Utah, where he functioned in various capacities, and on various committees both public and private, including a stint (in 1961–62)

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 279–80.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
as United States Commissioner of Education during the administration of John F. Kennedy. Early in his academic career—that is, prior to becoming an administrator and after holding positions in two LDS Institutes of Religion in Arizona—he crafted a number of essays in which he opined on what he understands as the large issues of religion and the questions of the meaning of life. The best of these essays have been assembled in *Religion, Reason, and Truth.*123 This book is thus a significant item in the intellectual history of cultural Mormonism.

Potentially the most revealing and sweeping generalizations offered by McMurrin appear in the concluding essay. Therein he maintains that the science associated with Charles Darwin has put an end to all the hopes of man except those sentiments associated with “naturalistic humanism.” After a career devoted to displaying a rich collection of liberal slogans about “life-affirming optimism” and “faith in man,” McMurrin reveals, as we have seen, some of his own religion. He concludes that in the final analysis there is no grand purpose or meaning to life other than that fashioned by man, nor is there any genuine deity, and eventually mankind will disappear without a trace. His “religion” is thus desperate and dark, grim and gloomy; it provides no consolation, nor does it offer a genuine hope either for the future of man on earth or beyond the grave.

McMurrin will accept no rationally unwarranted and hence presumably irrational hope or consolation, for his “passion for reason and reliable knowledge has robbed” him of such “enchantedments.”124 His is therefore a melancholy, forlorn sigh of one unwilling to trust God or believe the message of the prophets; he will have nothing to do with divine special revelations or prophetic faith. What remains for him is merely a “reverent naturalism. Not the bad type of naturalism that was formerly called materialism, ... but the good type that is usually called naturalistic humanism, or something like that. ... This naturalism,” he

---

123 Its major virtue is that it collects all of the best of McMurrin’s work under one cover. It is, however, puzzling that McMurrin’s Riecker Memorial Lecture, read at the University of Arizona on 1 April 1963 and eventually published under the title *Reason, Freedom, and the Individual* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1964), was not included in *Religion, Reason, and Truth.*

claims, "can generate an authentic piety and reverence for life. And it can enable an individual to invest life with purpose and meaning." 125

It is unfortunate that George Smith and Paul Kurtz did not allow someone deeply committed to naturalistic humanism to express these sentiments in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue. All we get in that book is a parade of battle cries directed at believers. We are not let in on what is hidden behind those slogans.

The essays in Religion, Reason, and Truth manifest the prudent employment of language appealing to the sentiments of those whose fascination with elements of modernity leads them to disdain what they consider the thoughtless, unsophisticated, unenlightened credulity of believers. The superior tone, as well as the appearance of having occupied an intellectual vantage point from which one can survey those below, is the very heart of much pandering to intellectual fashions that occupies a large place in contemporary intellectual life. McMurrin’s essays do nothing to break the hold of that particular tyranny and may even further it among cultural Mormons.

Above the Storm

In the “Preface” to Religion, Reason, and Truth, McMurrin presents himself as an objective student of “the large issues of the philosophy of religion. I have written,” he claims, “primarily not to express my own views on religion but rather simply to examine some of the more important ideas in the history of occidental religious thought.” 126 He is above the storm—quite detached from the issues he treats. He wants to be seen as a model of detached objectivity; he is merely “fascinated by theology.” 127 Some positions he feels are stronger and some weaker, but virtually none of it is grounded in “reliable knowledge” as opposed to mere longings and hopes. McMurrin’s commitment is to rationality, and certainly not to any community grounded in what he assumes to be credulity, folly, or fraud, nor is he under the tyranny of a sacred book or of a presumed revelation from the deity,

125 Ibid., 279–80.
126 Ibid., xi.
127 Ibid.
or to any other authority not warranted by reason as he understands reason. Presumably one can therefore trust the story he tells.\textsuperscript{128} Of course, this story has a plot—it is his story; he fashioned the plot and he selected the characters and he is there busy drawing the conclusions.

Can we locate his religion, as McMurrin tells his story? He denies wishing to preach. "Yet it seems to me," he reports, "that here and there something of a position shows through, though perhaps not clearly—certainly not in a way that would satisfy those who are looking for answers."\textsuperscript{129} Of course a position shows through precisely because he has called upon all his obvious capacities in an effort to make his religion appear as rational as possible. But in the end his account of what he calls his "religion"—his ultimate concern—turns out to be a depressing tale. McMurrin’s religion is a "naturalistic humanism" grounded on positivism. He grants that it is such that it "must inevitably make us sad."\textsuperscript{130} And he warns his readers not to expect too much, not to expect to find "answers"—that is, genuine hope—in his book, for the "position" that "shows through" is that there are no genuine answers to any of the presumably "large issues."\textsuperscript{131}

McMurrin holds out a very faint hope, for perhaps the cosmos will "in some inscrutable way" turn out to be on our side after all, and perhaps it is a "fault of our finite knowledge and understanding and lack of faith" (in what he does not say) that leaves us with such a sad tale to tell. But the faithful have always known that lack of faith in God yields a sad tale, when one takes an honest look at the human condition. It is precisely the realization of the fragility of our understanding and the limits of our knowledge that opens up the possibility of faith in God. But, earlier, McMurrin had taken pains to dismiss all such reasoning as "just plain irrationalism,"\textsuperscript{132} whatever that means.

\textsuperscript{128} The essays included in \textit{Religion, Reason, and Truth} carry the subtitle "historical essays."

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Ibid.}, xi.

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}, 280.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid.}, xi.

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Ibid.}, 13.
Liberal Slogans and Secular Dogmatism

But why would one turn to a book of essays on something called “the philosophy of religion” for answers to the great questions of life? Would it not seem that answers, if there are such, would come from prophetic revelations and the traditions that have grown up around such claims or directly from the deity? If there is a God who cares, would he not have let someone know? Have the heavens not been opened, from the Latter-day Saint perspective? Would there not be some traces left around for us to inspect? Does not prophetic faith rest on just such encounters with deity, and not on some merely human effort to figure things out?

McMurrin has an answer to that formulation of the question: “It is the fate of humankind that we can ask more questions than we can answer; and the questions that must remain unanswered, except by those who are blessed with a special knowledge that unfortunately many of us do not possess, are among the most important.” These questions—“most ultimate in meaning,” “most desperate in importance”—are precisely those that cannot be answered, McMurrin supposes, in any genuinely satisfactory way. Why? Because he begins by assuming that the terrible questions simply cannot be answered or answered satisfactorily; they simply cannot possibly be answered, even or especially by God, in the manner those “blessed by a special knowledge” think they can. Standing behind this circular reasoning is a dogmatism. Hence the assertion for which he is famous: “You don’t get books from angels.” McMurrin thus disregards the possibility of divine special revelation to prophets who speak for deity. Beginning with such a dogma—an article of his unfaith, against which he will apparently allow nothing to count—all religion seems to him to be entirely earthbound, whatever its loftier pretensions; it is simply man talking about man, sometimes in a loud voice. He claims to detest all dogmatisms, but his refusal to open up some questions amounts to a secular dogmatism.
McMurrin as Lapsed Liberal—Whatever Happened to Progress in History?

The best essay in *Religion, Reason, and Truth* is entitled “Time, History, and Christianity.” In it McMurrin struggles with the question of the soundness of the secular faith in historical progress that is so very prominent in the religious ideology of both liberalism and humanism—it being a key element in the nearly ubiquitous religion of modernity. Unfortunately, he has little to say about the process by which faith in historical progress became a core element of religion in the modern world and hence the key to liberal religion, with its faith in man. He has little to say about exactly why and how faith in progress was taken over by the Christian theologians who substituted it for older views. He offers an account of how belief in historical progress, a dogma that he correctly recognizes as a radically “unchristian idea,” took its rise in the secularized transformations of the understanding of God, divine purpose, and time found in the Bible.

Though wanting to believe in historical progress, for such would in his schema constitute a “genuine affirmation of life,” as well as reflect a wholesome “faith in man,” McMurrin simply cannot now bring himself to affirm this essential ingredient of liberal religion. Instead, he is keenly aware that liberalism has fallen on hard times precisely because faith in historical progress has turned out to be questionable or even untenable—for, in his language, an “optimistic faith in man was shallow and superficial.”

Hence, a decline or collapse of faith in historical progress has forced him to turn away from a liberal religious ideology and affirm a brand of hallowed yet hollow humanism, which can be more easily separated from what has turned out to be a superficial “faith in progress.”

McMurrin seems to grant the cogency of the most radical criticisms of “faith in progress.” And without belief in historical progress one must jettison liberal dogmas and illusions, and retreat to the grim world of a naturalistic humanism. “The Christian world,” according to McMurrin, “could not return to a genuinely Christian view of history, so strong was the grip of modernism.

---

133 Ibid., 78.
upon it.”¹³⁴ And so it is with McMurrin, whose final affirmations turn out to manifest life-denying pessimism.

But McMurrin has also striven to teach an entire generation of Mormon intellectuals that theirs is a life-affirming, optimistic faith—a faith in the essential goodness of man. He claims that Mormonism is deeply involved in elements of modernity and hence in some ways represents a brand of liberal religion. But liberal religion, he now admits, is burdened “by the false optimism of its own faith in progress”¹³⁵ and by a naive and unwarranted faith in man.

Apparently, when once infected with a McMurrin-like passion for reliable knowledge—once having tasted of the acids of modernity—there can be no turning back to an authentically Christian faith or biblical understanding of history; one can only push on to the desperation of naturalistic humanism. Why? Because positivism, and something like it presumably has the final say, will not accept as meaningful any of the talk about God found in either philosophical theology¹³⁶ or divine special revelations.¹³⁷ Hence he laments that it is our fate to be able to

ask more questions than we can answer; and the questions that must remain unanswered, except by those who are blessed with a special knowledge that unfortunately many of us do not possess, are among the most important. They are the most ultimate in meaning,

¹³⁴ Ibid., 114.
¹³⁵ McMurrin, Religion, Reason, and Truth, 114. The full passage reads as follows: Belief in “historical progress,” McMurrin argues, is “basically an unchristian idea and was never fully accepted by Christianity. But it was, nevertheless, in part a product of Christianity, and when it fell into disrepute, as recently as our own time, confusion and frustration followed in its wake. The Christian world, deceived by the false optimism of its own faith in progress, could not return to a genuinely Christian view of history, so strong was the grip of modernism upon it.”
¹³⁶ Ibid., 72–73. According to McMurrin, he once wrote “a dissertation designed to refute the logical positivists,” which experience he describes as coming “dangerously close” to making him a positivist (ibid., x).
¹³⁷ Ibid., 135.
where they have any genuine meaning, and certainly they are the most desperate in importance.\textsuperscript{138}

McMurrin apparently still assumes that positivism is somehow alive and well. But it was a fad that has fallen on hard times: it is now rather moribund except as an ideological crutch for social scientists and a few historians; it now appears as one more dogmatic delusion crafted by philosophers who were, among other things, anxious to end the quest for knowledge of first things with a system that claimed to possess the key to reliable knowledge. Positivism has been replaced by other somewhat less dogmatic ways of doing philosophy which do not always yield quite the confident denial of the meaningfulness of all God-talk. It would appear either that McMurrin is unwilling to confront such developments or that he has not quite adjusted to the shifting sands of opinion that constitute the literature of philosophy and theology. He would clearly have preferred that some things remain settled in order to provide a foundation from which he could then confidently punish the presumably primitive beliefs and crude superstitions of the faithful. But, if the past can teach us anything about our speculations, it is that they seem destined to yield to some seemingly more adequate or at least different account. To begin to sense our own situation in the flux of opinions may afford a kind of liberation that once was associated with Liberal Education and which has been suppressed by the rampant flowering of secular ideologies under the banner of modernity.

For McMurrin it appears that a skepticism grounded in what he considers reason has made a religion of redemption obsolete. At least in 1939, while McMurrin was still an employee of the Church, he claimed that

\begin{quote}
Reason arose in justified indignation at the moral pessimism of a religion of redemption and proclaimed a reality for temporal values, identifying morality with folkways and racial custom. The evolutionary nature of values was easily recognized as organic to the natural processes of the world, so morality was freed from dogma and abstractions of theology and given a new
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., xii.
meaning and life capable of achievement though relative in character. Accordingly, men turned toward the admirable task of creating a better social order, determined to find salvation in the realities of the temporal order rather than alone in an apocalyptic hope.139

How did this new “temporal” (or secular, relative, evolutionary) ethic turn out? Not too well, it seems, for even as far back as 1939 McMurrin granted that,

however great its service to the just cause of humanity, [it] has not been too satisfactory, for the axioms of positivism sounded the death knell of theism, and what was at first a healthy agnosticism has become a dangerous sophistry. God has disappeared from His heaven and with Him the eternal foundation of the moral law, for man and reason are upon the throne and morality is a transitory opinion. Perhaps the statement is too simple, but the problem is real, and its implication for the future of religion and moral progress is the most significant consideration challenging the human race.140

It appears that in 1939 McMurrin’s later pessimism had not yet blossomed. And he advanced the slogans of the then trendy Protestant liberalism. Hence he opined that “human nature is not depraved, nor is the world bad. They are whatever men make them in their eternal struggle to achieve the Divine.”141 Notice that there is no place for redemption from sin or mortality in such a formulation. He was, however, anxious to find a ground for his moral idealism by identifying what he then called “the will of God” with “an aspect of the world ground itself. All things by their very nature participate in the evolution of the universe, and morality can be no exception. But when firmly grounded in deity

140 Ibid.
141 Ibid., 7.
its ideal can remain an absolute."\textsuperscript{142} But presumably the "world ground," whatever that might be, is in a kind of flux and is itself evolving. And who knows where it will end up? A decade later, after experiencing the grim realities of World War II, McMurrin had become pessimistic about moral progress in history and seems to have abandoned much of his earlier optimism and especially his talk about the evolution of what he once called "the world ground." But positivism had removed the ground for a genuine theism. He was eventually left with a barren naturalistic humanism. Fortunately the Saints have not followed his lead in this regard.

**The Liberalizing Role of History**

Speaking of the "liberalizing power of the study of history," McMurrin holds that "there is no intellectual pursuit more calculated to make a free person of an ordinary person, to free him from his own cultural bondage, and no history is more liberating than the history of religion."\textsuperscript{143} The story of the rise of secular modernity, and then of the challenges to it, including both liberalism and humanism, is certainly one such instance. Yet perhaps because we are close to it and it has become part of our own understanding of the world through the explanations, categories, and slogans it contains, we find it difficult to allow the lessons of its historical character to free us from the bondage it inflicts upon us.

I certainly agree that the serious study of the history of religion tends to free an individual "from the blinders imposed by his own place and time" and thereby also allow a better access to one's own world. Such a freeing is possible to the extent that one is able to distance oneself from the explanations, categories, and fashions of one's own world when approaching the texts that provide the window to the past. One must learn to listen to what the texts have to say and resist the urge to tell them what they must mean on the basis of what one brings to them as cultural baggage from one's own world.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{143} Sterling M. McMurrin, "Toward Intellectual Anarchy," Dialogue 26/2 (Summer 1993): 209-13. This is a review of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism.*
To speak of "biblical religion" in some confident, unequivocal way, as McMurrin does, is simply impossible from within the horizon of meaning of the Bible itself. To refer to the "theology" of the Christian (or Mormon) scriptures approaches those texts with categories quite foreign to their own perspective. McMurrin seems quite unconcerned with the hermeneutical problem when he tackles the past. Though unfortunate, such neglect is also understandable. It has not been at all common until quite recently for Anglo-American historians to give attention to their own historicity or to the historicity of the language of the texts they read and write. Hence the work of some scholars, whose training and disposition have served to blind them to the possibilities of the past as well as the future, has produced the narrow, stunted view of the range of possibilities that is so common in the literature influenced by positivism. And, as is well known, positivism in several varieties was once believed to have made belief in God impossible. From such a crimped perspective, it is indeed difficult, perhaps even impossible, to hear much of anything, except superstition, madness, or folly, in the texts that propose to tell us about the Gods and their ways.

Conclusion

A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue is, for many reasons, an undistinguished anthology—its failure to look honestly, deeply, and self-critically at the real content of naturalistic humanism, its dreary litany of criticisms directed against the Church and Brigham Young University, as well as its brief, shoddy criticism and scholarly neglect of the Book of Mormon, provide us with something far more inaccurate and unseemly than interesting or genuinely challenging. And in no way does the content of A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue rise above the banal—not even as propaganda for a secular ideology, which it clearly is. I trust that my treatment of Sterling McMurrin’s views on naturalistic humanism will have fleshed out something that was clearly missing in A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue—a genuine confrontation of the religious ideology of humanism with the faith of Latter-day Saints.
Lacking a candid account of naturalistic humanism, we have had to turn to McMurrin’s account, which turns out to be an unusually straightforward sketch of a proud, bleak, and dark message. He insists that “the matter of cosmic hope centered in belief in God is usually not a genuinely rational quest. Too often it is simply an instinctive, irrational drive that looks for vindication by reason.” So the hope that McMurrin holds out is not in God, since such a hope is not genuinely rational. And yet he admits to being “fascinated by theology, but distrustful of all theology and theologians.”

But I wonder. When I recently expressed my own distrust of theology and theologians—Mormon and cultural Mormon included—McMurrin was annoyed, as he was earlier in his career when he heard Hugh Nibley speak scornfully of theology and theologians. Why? Because some prefer the prophets to pronouncements of philosophers and other pundits about God? The problem I have with “theology,” especially that flowing from a philosophical culture, is that it is merely the words of man about divine things, rather than what God might actually have revealed. Hence the quest for knowledge of divine things by unaided human reason appears to me to be arbitrary, empty, and futile. Only God can save us.

If we have in mind something quite unlike what has traditionally been called “natural theology,” there are of course several intellectual pursuits engaged in by the Saints that can be called “theology.” Hence, Massimo Introvigne seems justified in saying that, “although Hugh Nibley has often argued that there is no such a thing as a Mormon theology (theology being intrinsically incompatible with continuous revelation), a number of Nibley’s followers have produced what in any other religious tra-

144 McMurrin, Religion, Reason, and Truth, 279.
147 The label “natural theology” seems to have had its beginning with the Stoic philosopher Marcus Terentius Varro. It was brought into Christian circles through Augustine’s highly influential City of God. Augustine had in mind by “natural theology” the speculations of philosophers about divine things and not divine revelation, at least as understood by earliest Christians and by Latter-day Saints.
dition would be classified as theological apologetics." Efforts to defend what is believed to be divine revelation or the texts that report such events are fundamentally unlike the arguments advanced as part of what has traditionally been called natural theology. Such efforts can be described as apologetic. These include efforts to defend the revelation from criticism, as well as a more or less rational effort to set forth its contents in an orderly fashion. Hence, it is clearly against what amounts to natural theology (or what David Hume called "natural religion") that Nibley has directed his criticisms. Certainly neither Nibley nor I have an objection to apologetics, since we have, with many others, written in defense of the faith.

On the other hand, McMurrin is merely curious about (rather than accepting of) what he calls theology. And he is disdainful of apologetics, except of course his own apology for naturalistic humanism. And yet he seems determined to make a case for Latter-day Saints getting involved in something that approaches natural theology rather than attending to what God has revealed to or through prophets. In addition, he seems to assume that Latter-day Saints should be beholden to whatever ideology is currently fashionable in the culture, if it is presented as a fruit of rational endeavor. He seems to hold that a secularized notion of reason should call the tune and that the Church should do the dancing—the product being "theology." And, unfortunately, this is at times what tends to happen.149 I am therefore even more distrustful of such endeavors (whether speculative, dogmatic, or systematic, or, as in the case of *A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue*, merely polemical) than is McMurrin, but for different reasons. I will, however, also admit to being fascinated by such literature, manifesting as it

---


149 I have in mind various essays by self-proclaimed Mormon or (in some cases) former-Mormon "theologians." See, for example, Paul J. Toscano’s *The Sanctity of Dissent* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), reviewed in this issue on pages 298-316; or Margaret and Paul Toscano’s *Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), or many of the essays in Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992). One might also include essays such as Janice Allred’s "Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother," *Dialogue* 27/2 (Summer 1994): 15–39, and numerous others in recent issues of *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*. 
does pride in one of its most impressive, influential, and sometimes destructive forms.

Finally, Thomas W. Flynn, a senior editor of Free Inquiry, has provided an account of the Smith/Kurtz conference in a laudatory review of A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue. He claims that “it may be only in Utah, and most piercingly at BYU, that we can still observe the medieval spectacle of thoughtful men and women undergoing relentless and open assault from unassailable guardians of entrenched orthodoxy.”150 But if we focus for a moment on the secular fundamentalism that is the more or less entrenched orthodoxy advanced under the banner of humanism by Kurtz and company, versions of which are more or less dominant in secularized colleges and universities, then the thoughtful men and women who are being openly besieged turn out to be the faithful Latter-day Saint faculty at Brigham Young University. Presumably this is not what Flynn had in mind. But, quite ironically, both his essay and the book he reviews—A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue—provide exemplify such an attack.


**The Return of Simon and Helena**

Reviewed by William J. Hamblin

Nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God.

Joseph Smith

Paul James Toscano has created a minor stir along the Wasatch Front in recent years. Toscano has enjoyed an uncontested public platform from which he has repeatedly denounced the Latter-day Saint Church, its doctrines, and its leaders. Most Latter-day Saints are familiar only with a sanitized version of Toscano’s ideas via carefully choreographed sound bites. The recent publication of a collection of his essays and speeches, *The Sanctity of Dissent,* offers a chance to examine the rationale for his attacks on the Church and to evaluate his ideas in their full context. We should thank Signature Books for providing us this opportunity to see the real, uncensored Paul Toscano. Even a superficial reading of Toscano’s essays reveals that from the traditional Latter-day Saint perspective he is—to say the least—unorthodox.

---

Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–24) was widely believed by early Christians to be the founder of Gnosticism and father of heresy; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I, 23, 2; Eusebius, *History of the Church* II, 13, 1. Helena, Simon’s female companion, was said to have been an incarnation of the Mother Goddess “Thought” (*ennoia*); Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 26; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I, 23, 2–4.

1 *TPJS,* 205.
Toscano recognizes that “the modern church’s view of the restoration [is] irreconcilably opposed to [his] own” (p. xv), and that he doesn’t “fit into the Mormon mainstream” (p. 23). For him this means, of course, that the Church as a whole is wrong and that he is right. The Brethren are condemned for “mak[ing] additions to the gospel message” (p. xiv), as if this is not precisely the purpose of continuing revelation.2

For Toscano there is little room for revelation from Church leaders. Ideas and policies should be allowed “to accumulate support on the basis of merit alone; [only then] can a group be assured that its decisions are made in light of the experience of all its concerned members rather than the limited experience of its leadership enclave” (p. 144). Toscano apparently sees the Church as an ecclesiastical political organization where lobbies and campaigns should influence decision making. Toscano seems to realize that even in such circumstances his “party” would form an extreme minority among Latter-day Saints. Thus, what is necessary to protect the [Latter-day Saint] community from both the wrongheadedness of the multitude [i.e., the vast majority of Church members] and the narrow-mindedness of the elite [General Authorities] is a courageous and loyal opposition [i.e., Toscano and friends]. When the wisdom of the many and prudence of the few fail, an organization is most likely to find the vitality and vision to survive in the voices of its dissenting members. (p. 145)

This condescending attitude toward Church members should be troubling for any would-be Toscanites. For Toscano, ordinary members of the Church are apparently too “wrongheaded” to think for themselves. It seems inconceivable to him that someone could study the Church carefully, intelligently, prayerfully, and rationally and still conclude that its principles are true, its leaders inspired, and that it is the path to salvation. We should all thus humbly turn to the “Mormon intellectual [i.e., dissenting] com-

2 Although Toscano insists that modern prophets should not “make additions to the gospel message,” his essays demonstrate that he seems to feel he should.
munity”—rather than the prophets, scriptures, and our own inspiration and reason—for guidance in these latter-days.

Toscano has conveniently provided us with tests by which he feels any of his “additions to the gospel message” (p. xiv) should be evaluated.

In order to test the truth of any inspiration, statement, or purported revelation—even of a church leader—it must be subjected to four tests: [the first two are] First, it must not be inconsistent with the scriptures; second, it must not be inconsistent with the teachings of the prophets living and dead. (pp. 163–64)

Readers of Toscano should pay careful attention to how often Toscano’s own ideas meet, or fail to meet, these two criteria.

Toscano exhibits a remarkable indifference to careful contextual reading and exegesis of both scriptural and historical texts. A particularly egregious example of this is found in his reading of Joseph Smith’s statement:

That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they [the Church] are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is on the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize. (p. 60)3

As Toscano sees it, this passage is “often quoted to members who are critical of [Church leaders] as a warning that criticism can lead to apostasy. But this twists the original meaning and purpose of the statement” (p. 60). He maintains that this passage was directed “to church leaders—to apostles and seventies—who were critical of church members” (p. 61). Thus, for Toscano, Joseph was not saying that Toscano should not criticize the General Authorities, but that the General Authorities should not criticize Toscano! Although it is true that Joseph’s sermon was given to a meeting of the early General Authorities who were preparing to leave on a mission,4 Joseph specifically directed his statements to both the

---

3 Citing *TPJS*, 156.
4 *HC* 3:382–83.
"Twelve and all Saints." Thus, while this principle certainly applies to General Authorities, Joseph also specifically directed his remarks to "all Saints," a category which, until recently, presumably included Paul Toscano. In other words, even Paul Toscano, and not just a General Authority, is capable of the hypercriticism which leads to apostasy. And, according to Joseph, a certain sign of apostasy is for either a member or a Church leader to claim that the Church as a whole is "out of the way, while he himself is righteous." Toscano's interpretation of this passage reminds me of the story of the dotty old woman, who, while watching her son marching in a parade, blithely announced that "Everyone’s out of step but my Johnny!"

Many of Toscano's theological dogmas are supported by neither scripture, prophetic teaching, nor argumentation; they are simply asserted on his own authority. On the few occasions when he does reference scripture, his exegesis is frequently idiosyncratic. For example, Doctrine and Covenants 113:8 reads:

He [Isaiah] had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel; and to put on her [Zion's] strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost.

For Toscano this is not simply a case of using the feminine English pronoun to personify the Church as a whole as Zion, but is instead a call "to the whole church to accept the doctrine of the fullness of the priesthood of men and women" (p. 81). Toscano likewise reads 2 Nephi 2:11–13 as referring to a "composite of two opposing principles, male and female" (p. 86), despite the fact that this passage makes absolutely no reference to such an idea—or even to males and females—but only to the idea of "opposition in all things."

Toscano makes no attempt to hide the fact that he despises modern Latter-day Saint doctrines and leaders. He compares what

---

5 TPJS, 156.
6 Referring to Isaiah 52:1.
he sees as the “prevailing view of the current [Latter-day Saint] leadership” to “the salvation plan of compulsion scripturally attributed to Satan” (p. 135). He speaks of the “Brezhnevization of the church,” in which the Church uses “precisely the system [of tyrannical controls] that was employed by Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev” (p. 143) to bolster the faltering Soviet Union. He accuses the Church of “unrighteous dominion, spiritual abuse, theological correctness, and ecclesiastical tyranny” (p. 113), strongly implying that the current Church leaders are false prophets by contrasting their alleged behavior with what Toscano feels should be the behavior of “true prophets” (p. 166). But the Church is not merely misguided in its policies or afflicted by human error among some of its leaders. Rather, for Toscano,

Evil [in the Church] is something quite specific: it is the persistent systematic abuse of power by the strong [Church leaders] to the detriment of the weak [members]. Evil in this sense can corrupt individuals and institutions. The church is not exempt. Within its divinely authorized structures, evil can and does manifest itself as spiritual abuse. (p. 145)

The logical extension of this idea is that “the church is not the source of salvation. The church is what needs to be saved” (p. 138). Just who is to save the Church should be rather obvious.

Toscano tacitly recognizes that the vast majority of Latter-day Saints fail to see any evidence of such intrinsic evil in the Church and its leaders when he admits that the “wide-spread abuses [by Church leaders] are . . . invisible” (p. 155). Of course such invisibility can be most simply explained by the hypothesis that such “abuses” do not exist outside of the minds of a few dissenters. But Toscano has another explanation:

Few are prepared to admit that such abuses [in the Church] are not the result of the personal foibles and failings of individuals but of the systemic failings of the church itself: from false teachings, false doctrines, false perceptions, and false practices. (p. 156)

Ordinary members are deceived by the leaders of the Church who are hiding the truth, deluding themselves by “deny[ing] the evi-
Toscano, *The Sanctity of Dissent* (Hamblin) 303
dence" and "rationaliz[ing] that the church is true" (p. 155) anyway.

But even if the institutional Church and its leaders are in apostasy, what of the unique truth claims of Latter-day Saint scripture and tradition? Can something be salvaged from the wreckage of the Restoration? For Toscano, does Latter-day Saint doctrine offer any unique truths which—despite the usurpation of tyrannical leaders—still provide the path to salvation and exaltation? The answer is no. Toscano's view is that "people are called of God to their spiritual convictions" (p. 112), by which he means that God calls people to believe whatever they happen to believe. His next statement makes this clear: "Some are called to one religion, some to another, and some to none at all" (p. 112). His position on the truth claims of the Church is further clarified when he says that "for those called by birth or rebirth to be Latter-day Saints, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living church on the face of the whole earth. This is not to deny the truths to which God has called others" (p. 112). In other words, Toscano is an unabashed relativist: all churches are equally true for those who believe in them. Toscano is not making the traditional Latter-day Saint claim that there are important truths to be found in most religions, and that God has inspired great religious leaders and sages in many different traditions, places, and times. Rather, he is claiming that all religions are equally true. Therefore, Christianity is just as true as Buddhism, Islam, or Hinduism—but no more so. This is the only way to make sense of Toscano's odd statement that he still "believes in the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Norse gods" (pp. 34–35).

Paradoxically, Toscano does not grant this same relativistic cosmic truthfulness to the doctrines of late twentieth-century Mormonism. Although Toscano "believes in the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Norse gods" (pp. 34–35), the traditional Latter-day Saint doctrine of God the Father is "patriotry, . . . the idolatry of God the Father" (p. 156). Here we have the ironic situation where Toscano—who claims to be merely a faithful, ordinary but oppressed Latter-day Saint—apparently believes in Zeus, but (as I shall describe below) rejects the Latter-day Saint understanding of Elohim.
Suppose for a moment that Toscano’s view of the universe is correct. Then may it not be possible that I have been called by God to believe in an oppressive patriarchy whose power is based on spiritual abuse? From an eternal perspective might this not be just the right kind of church for people like me? Might this not be the “spiritual conviction” to which I have been “called of God”? Apparently not. Like many “politically correct” multiculturalists, the facade of toleration in Toscano’s religious relativism can only be taken so far. Some doctrines of the nature of God are simply too appalling to be acceptable, even in Toscano’s relativistic cosmos. Although Toscano feigns that all religions are equal, in reality some religions are more equal than others.

If the Latter-day Saint understanding of God the Father is “patriolatry,” what, precisely, is the nature of the god whom Toscano has been “called of God” to believe? His essay “All Is Not Well in Zion: False Teachings of the True Church” (pp. 153–75) answers this question. Toscano informs us that this essay “served as the sole evidentiary basis for my excommunication” (p. 153). Readers can decide for themselves whether any other evidence was necessary.

Toscano informs us that:

All is not well in Zion—not because some people are imperfect, but because there is a steady, relentless advancement of an heretical concept of God. . . . I believe all Zion’s ills, including spiritual abuse, spring directly or indirectly from modern Mormonism’s oversimplified God-concept. (p. 172, emphasis added)

What is this “oversimplified God-concept” which is the cause of “all Zion’s ills”?

For me, a heresy is a teaching of the church7 that is significantly more likely to lead to evil than to good. . . . Our chief idol is a false concept of God, a heresy which I call “patriolatry.” It is the idolatry of God the Father. From this single heresy springs an unnumbered

---

7 Note that, for Toscano, “heresy is a teaching of the church.” This is quite revealing—the Church preaches heresy, not individual members who are in apostasy.
host of mischiefs and abuses, including—to name the
most egregious—a false concept of salvation; false
ideas about priesthood and authority; misunderstand-
ings about church structure and membership; poison-
ous teaching about gender and sexuality; misconcep-
tions about ordinances; and a false picture of Zion.
(pp. 156-57)

And what is the nature of the abominable God of
“patriolatry?” It is the standard Latter-day Saint concept of God
as found in Doctrine and Covenants 130:22, the idea “that the
main members of the Godhead are the Father and the Son, two
separate and distinct beings with glorified bodies of flesh and
bone” (p. 157). The Latter-day Saint doctrine of God “is con-
coced out of half-truths, misperceptions, and trivializations”
(p. 158). Rather, for Toscano, “Jesus [is the] God of the Old Test-
tament . . . both Father and Son”—the Father and the Son are not
two separate beings, but are one and the same! The Latter-day
Saint concept of God is not based on divine revelation; rather,
“patriolatry is nothing but a composite of some of the most abu-
sive characteristics of controlling, modern, middle-aged, white,
western males” (p. 161, emphasis added). All of this undermines
Latter-day Saint priesthood authority, since “patriolatry then is
the source of the modern church’s false concept of priesthood
and authority” (p. 162).

But if the traditional Latter-day Saint understanding of God
the Father is idolatrous “patriolatry,” what is the true nature of
God? It is, quite simply, Paul Toscano’s stunningly idiosyncratic
version of the Adam-God theory.

Utterly repressed from the Mormon God-concept are
the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young that
Michael the archangel is the father of our premortal
spirits. . . . Christ, the eternal God and father of heaven
and earth, raised an archangel [Michael/Adam] to
divine status and then [Jesus the Heavenly Father] con-
descended to become the Son of that archangel
[Michael/Adam]. . . . He [Jesus the Heavenly Father]
agrees to make his son [Michael/Adam] a Father, not
only the progenitor of our spirits and mortal bodies,
but the heavenly Father of Christ incarnate. . . . There-after, Christ [the Father] calls Michael [Adam] “my Father who is in heaven,” and Michael [Adam] speaks to us of Christ [the Heavenly Father] in the gracious anthem: “This is my Beloved Son! Hear Him!” (pp. 158–59)

But this is not all. Toscano is fixated on his personal interpretation of the Latter-day Saint Mother in Heaven, which—unremarkably enough—draws much more from late twentieth-century feminist ideology and New-Age Mother-goddess worship than from Latter-day Saint scripture. Toscano makes the bold statement that “if the scriptures are silent or deficient on a point, we cannot conclude the negative proposition with respect to that point” (p. 89). Quite true. On the other hand, it is even more dangerous to conclude, because the scriptures do not mention an idea, that that idea is therefore necessarily true, which is precisely what Toscano does in his speculations on the Mother Goddess. He insists that the “dearth of information about this being” is because “plain and precious things [have been] taken from the scriptures” (p. 95, cf. 86–90). This absence of information on our Mother in Heaven is quite convenient, since it allows Toscano limitless range for conjecture.

I know of no Latter-day Saint who would deny the existence of our Mother in Heaven. Indeed, there is an article entitled “Mother in Heaven” in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism,8 in which the existence of our Heavenly Mother is clearly affirmed. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, scripture provides little or no information on this subject. Toscano helpfully repairs this deficiency in revelation by concocting a lengthy fantasy about her (pp. 81–98). Those who reject Toscano’s imaginations are warned that they will “inadvertently find [them]selves fighting against God” (p. 98).

Lost in the simplified God-concept of the modern church are the female divinities. Brigham Young taught that Eve is the mother of all living. She continues to be

---

so denominated in the temple ceremony. “Mother of All Living” was the ancient epithet for the Great Goddess. Thus for her children’s sake, Eve the Great Mother [the celestial wife of Jesus the Heavenly Father] entered Eden as a daughter, yielding up her divinity to become the helpmeet of her son Adam [Michael]. For her children’s sake she sacrificed her glory and immortality to inhabit the dreary world. For their sakes she suffered death to wander in the earth as a light to them that dwell in darkness—the Shekinah. [Qabbalistic “indwelling” of the Spirit] the Hokma [wisdom], the paraclete [comforter], the Holy Spirit. (p. 159)

If I have understood all of this correctly, it seems that Toscano would have us believe that Christ is the Eternal Father, the celestial husband to the Heavenly Mother. Their archangel son Michael becomes Adam. The Heavenly Mother then becomes an incarnate mortal—paralleling Jesus the Heavenly Father’s redemptive incarnation—by becoming Eve and incestuously marrying her son Adam to produce the human race. Upon her death, she remains disembodied as the Holy Spirit.

The atonement was not the work of Christ alone. Rather each of the Toscanan deities seems to play an atoning role.

We seem to have lost sight of the truth that our Mothers [Eve and Mary] and Fathers [Jesus and Adam] in heaven yield up their glory, descend into mortality, suffer as sinners, and die so that we their children may be exalted. (p. 160)

Thus, “in the end of time,”

Father Michael, the ancient of days, shall sit. And Mary, the Mother of Christ, shall be honored in the Godhead. The Father [Christ]—Mother [Eve/Holy Spirit]—Son

---

9 For some reason Toscano does not mention the fact that the epithet “mother of all living” is not a new esoteric revelation of the Heavenly Mother by Brigham Young, but is in fact a description of Eve found in Genesis 3:20.

10 Note that, for Toscano, Christ is not the sinless Atoner, but is himself a sinner. There is certainly a significant theological difference between Christ suffering for our sins, and Christ “suffering as [a] sinner.”
Toscano is manifestly correct in his contention that “all these teachings both leaders and members [of the Church] ignore or deny” (p. 161). And it is a good thing too, since these ideas have absolutely no basis in either scripture or the teachings of our prophets. Toscano’s speculations utterly fail his own two tests to evaluate false doctrine. Whatever Brigham may have speculated about Adam-God, it certainly had nothing to do with Toscano’s Quadrinity. Toscano’s doctrine of the divine Quadrinity of Father-Mother-Son-Daughter is merely his own fantasy. He makes no attempt to provide scripture, prophetic teaching, or even rational argument for his ideas. He simply asserts them, as if we are all expected to accept blindly Toscano’s radical reinterpretation of the Godhead on the basis of his authority alone.

Unfortunately, Toscano often seems less than forthcoming to the media with an accurate explanation of his ideas and their implications. Recently, he appeared with Van Halé on the radio talk-show “Religion on the Line,” and engaged in the following exchanges.

_Hale:_ Your position isn’t that here are some interesting speculations, it’s that here’s something that if we had this concept it would clear up the problems that we have in the Church. . . .

_Toscano:_ If I have condemnatory language or rhetoric in this article—chapter nine of my book [“All Is Not Well in Zion: False Teachings of the True Church,” in] _The Sanctity of Dissent_—it isn’t because I condemn the Church for not accepting the Holy Ghost as a female. I condemn the Church—to the extent I do, which I don’t think is very severe, but the rhetoric is there—. . . for closing off the discussion, for proposing a very simplified view of the Godhead.

. . .

_Hale:_ I do see within your article what I would consider an extremely radical reinterpretation of Mormonism; . . . the attack on the Mormon hierarchy and your discussion of the concept of salvation and so forth I see as
being a very radical departure from what I see as historical Mormonism.

Toscano: The radio audience is at a great disadvantage because you are able to—with my book in your hand—confront me on the text about which they have no information. So all I can do to counter you is by saying I have made no radical reinterpretation of Mormonism, and that you have misread my article. And I guess people will have to buy the book and read the article to see which one of us is correct.11

Although Toscano does not provide any scriptural authority or rational argument for his interpretation of the Godhead,12 an attempt at scriptural justification for the Toscanan Godhead was made by Janice Merrill Allred, sister of Toscano’s wife Margaret Merrill Toscano.13 The relationship between Allred’s article and Toscano’s ideas is nowhere made explicit, but it is quite clear that Allred’s theology is closely related to Toscano’s. Like Toscano, Allred maintains that the correct interpretation of scripture is that the Father and Son are a single being,14 and that the Mother in Heaven is the Holy Spirit.15 (However, Allred never ventures into a discussion of Toscano’s Adam-God/Mary theory, and it is possible that she rejects this doctrine.)

Allred’s attempt to establish that the Father and Son are a single being on the basis of Latter-day Saint scripture and Joseph Smith’s teachings founders on several exegetical errors. Her basic methodology is to identify a few passages in the Book of Mormon that make ambiguous statements concerning the relationship of the Father and Son. These she interprets to mean that the Father

---

12 Some elucidation on the Toscanan Quadrinity can be found in Margaret and Paul Toscano, Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 29–104, with a fuller version of their “myth” on pages 68–70. See also the review by Brian M. Hauglid, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/2 (1994): 250–82.
14 Ibid., 18–27.
15 Ibid., 27–35.
and the Son are the same being. Now it is certainly true that some passages in the Book of Mormon concerning the Godhead are ambiguous, and can be interpreted in several different ways. Allred’s interpretation of these passages is not, however, the only possible one. 16 While it may be true that we cannot prove the traditional Latter-day Saint doctrine of the Godhead from the Book of Mormon alone, neither can we prove the existence of the Trinity from Old Testament texts alone. The revelations of each dispensation are cumulative, leading us line upon line to a fuller understanding of the gospel.

Allred’s exegetical method is to insist upon the validity of only one of several possible interpretations of ambiguous passages in the Book of Mormon concerning the Godhead, while conveniently ignoring other unambiguous scriptures and prophetic teachings which explicitly contradict her interpretation. For example, Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 reads:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.

Although she has obviously read this passage (she references it on page 24), she ignores its clear implications: the Father and Son have separate bodies of flesh and bones. This is precisely how Joseph Smith understood its meaning:

I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. 17

Likewise, Joseph taught:

---

16 James E. Talmage, The Articles of Faith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1899), 465–73, including an official statement by the First Presidency. Neither Toscano nor Allred makes any attempt to engage this position.

Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all. If any man attempts to refute what I am about to say, after I have made it plain, let him beware. As the Father hath power in Himself, so hath the Son power in Himself, to lay down His life and take it again, so He [the Son] has a body of His own. The Son doeth what he hath seen the Father do: then the Father hath some day laid down His life and taken it again; so He [the Father] has a body of His own; each one [the Father and the Son] will be in His own body; and yet the sectarian world believe the body of the Son is identical with the Father’s.\(^\text{18}\)

Allred also ignores the obvious implications of Joseph’s 1838 account of his first vision:

> It [the light] no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy [Satan] which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him! (Joseph Smith—History 1:17)

If the Father and Son are one and the same, as Allred insists, who is the being who calls Christ his “Beloved Son”? Allred never even attempts an answer, but Toscano provides a hint. Based on his Quadrinity theory, Toscano believes that it was “Michael [Adam, who] speaks to us of Christ [the Heavenly Father] in the gracious anthem: ‘This is my Beloved Son! Hear Him!’ ” (pp. 158–59). Really?

Both Allred and Toscano maintain that the Holy Ghost is the disembodied Mother in Heaven. Yet this too contradicts Joseph Smith’s explicit teachings:

\(^{18}\) TPJS, 312 (11 June 1843 = HC 5:426); cf. Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 212, 214, emphasis added.
Joseph also said that the Holy Ghost is now in a state of Probation which if he should perform in righteousness he may pass through the same or a similar course of things that the Son has.19

But the Holy Ghost is yet a Spiritual body and waiting to take himself a body, as the Savior did or as God did, or the gods before them took bodies.20

Why should we seriously entertain the idea that Joseph Smith secretly believed or taught that the Holy Ghost was the disembodied Mother in Heaven, when he explicitly referred to the Holy Ghost using masculine pronouns, and taught that he was awaiting incarnation?

In fact, Toscano has admitted that his doctrines have no real basis in scripture or in Joseph Smith’s teachings. In a radio interview he said:

I’m not going at it [the idea that the Holy Ghost is the Mother in Heaven] from the point of view of historical Mormonism. I don’t care whether in history Joseph Smith ever said it. He should have said it. If he doesn’t say it somebody has to say it now. . . . What I’m saying is that even if it isn’t in the [Latter-day Saint scriptural and historical] texts, the Holy Ghost is with us. We have got to revisit these things in the power of the Spirit.21

In other words, although these ideas cannot be found in Latter-day Saint scripture or prophetic teachings, the Holy Spirit has revealed them to Toscano—so they must be true. Thus, Joseph “should have said it.” This attitude may indicate that we are seeing the beginnings of a new religion, a splinter group that is loosely based on the Mormon tradition, but which has developed into something quite different. Perhaps it could be called New-Age Mormonism.

19 Ehat and Cook, The Words of Joseph Smith, 245, recorded by Franklin D. Richards, emphasis added.
20 Ibid., 305 n. 26, recorded by George Laub, emphasis added.
21 Toscano, interview with Van Hale on “Religion on the Line,” 9 October 1994; transcribed from a tape recording, emphasis added.
Now, of course, Toscano has the right to believe whatever he wants to believe about God. Likewise, all of the rest of us—as well as the institutional Church—may accept or reject Toscano’s speculations. Yet, for some reason, many dissenters are under the strange delusion that the Church, by publicly rejecting Toscano’s heresy, is somehow trying to suppress freedom of thought and speech. The Church, as an institution, has the responsibility to reject certain ideas or doctrines which it considers false; it can also determine that it will not use its ecclesiastical authority or resources to support ideas which are understood to be antithetical to the gospel. But simply by saying that an idea is false or heretical, and that members of the Church should not preach it, the Church is not saying that someone outside the Church cannot believe or proclaim that idea. Perhaps some dissenters are unaware that the Church is, after all, a voluntary organization. Each member is perfectly free to accept or reject the teachings of the prophets. Likewise the Church, as an institution, should be free to accept or reject the teachings of its individual members.

On the other hand, Church leaders have the responsibility to advise members that certain behavior is not in accord with the commandments of God, or that certain ideas are fundamentally incompatible with Church doctrine. If dissenters or sinners behave in a manner that reaches outrageously beyond the bounds of Church norms, they may be excommunicated. This is what the Lord tells us on this matter:

The day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off [i.e., excommunicated] from among the people [i.e., the Church];

For they [those “who will not hear”] have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant;

They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world. (D&C 1:14–16)
Furthermore the Church neither claims the authority, nor does it have the means, to compel anyone to do anything or believe anything against his or her will. It certainly cannot "silence" anyone. Has the Church ever attempted to use the force of law to prevent Toscano or any other dissenter from saying or publishing whatever they please? Far from silencing him, his excommunication has actually enhanced Toscano’s ability to get his ideas in print, as I’m sure the Church leaders knew that it regretfully would. Toscano has always been and is now free to think, believe, say, or write anything he wishes.

Latter-day Saint scripture teaches that the Father and Son are separate beings. Toscano teaches that they are one and the same, and that to believe otherwise is to commit the "heresy" of "patriolatry" (p. 156). If the Church teaches X and Toscano teaches not-X it seems inevitable that one or the other must be wrong. No amount of pleading for tolerance for different ideas can prevent us from ultimately making a decision: do we believe X or not-X? The fatal weakness of contemporary dissenters is that they are unwilling to make the inevitable commitment about what they really believe and don’t believe. They wish to be in the Church, but not of the Church. They wish to remain neither hot nor cold toward the Church and the gospel. Tolerance of divergent opinion does not require that we abandon all logic and reason, proclaiming that both X and not-X are simultaneously true so that those who believe in not-X will feel less out of place at Church. Nor does it require the Church to abandon the commandments against sexual promiscuity (as Toscano seems to advise; pp. 112-13, 170-71) so that the sexually promiscuous don’t feel any unpleasant guilt about their sins.

Toscano denounces the Church leaders as heretics; but when they respond that it is Toscano who is, in fact, the heretic, he cries "spiritual abuse," insisting that the Church is attempting to suppress his freedom of thought and speech. After numerous attempts by leaders to counsel Toscano, the Church was finally forced to excommunicate him for heresy. Toscano’s response was to issue a de facto excommunication of the leadership of the Church.

Any action to excommunicate a believing member for the purpose of coercing obedience to church leaders,
church policy, or in the interest of church image is an abomination in the eyes of God, is utterly invalid, and will result in the de facto excommunication of the perpetrators who will suffer a withdrawal of the spirit and then amen to the priesthood of those leaders. (p. 172)

Although he never makes an explicit claim, I rather suspect that Toscano believes that his ideas are based on a revelation to him from God. Be that as it may, he clearly claims that the Holy Ghost is inspiring his attacks on the Church (p. 152). Indeed, Toscano promises an imminent revelation "of the doctrine of the Heavenly Mother" (p. 89).

The Heavenly Father was revealed 4,000 years ago, and the Redeeming Son 2,000 years ago. Could it be time now for the revelation of the Bride, the Comforting Woman of Holiness, the Lady, the Queen of queens and her connection to the earth, the environment, the heavens, the angels, and the Father and the Son whom we have heretofore worshipped? Could we be standing on the eve of a second restoration, when—as the Book of Mormon prophesies—the Lord shall "set his hand again the second time to recover his people" (2 Nephi 25:17; 29:1)? Must the same Goddess who in the beginning condescended first be in the end unveiled last? Must She, the last God to be worshipped, be the first to come again as part of the final parousia? I cannot say. I say only that all is not well—nor is it likely ever again to be well in Zion. For unless there is a spiritual revival in mythical dimensions, the restoration, I fear, is doomed to resolve itself into yet another sect full of ethical pretensions and xenophobic aspirations—and nothing more. (p. 175)

Toscano claims that he "was excommunicated from the church for publicly expressing . . . criticisms" (p. xv) of the Church and its leaders. But any reader of The Sanctity of Dissent can plainly see that there is much, much more to it than that. Toscano's dissent is not mere benign disagreement over esoteric doctrine, or a helpful reminder that problems such as materialism
and pride afflict many in the Church. Rather, as Toscano himself has put it, “The real issue is: if Toscano is right, then the Brethren have made a mistake, and we [the Latter-day Saint Church] have gone astray.”22 For Toscano the institution of the Church is hopelessly cruel, corrupt, and unhallowed (p. 151); its leaders are not prophets, but evil tyrants; its doctrines are false and heretical; its members are mindless automatons (pp. 27, 140–41, 145). Indeed, the Church encompasses “the heart of darkness, the soul of evil” (p. 146). Only the dissenters have the intelligence and inspiration to recognize this tremendous evil for what it is—the rest of us are blind dupes whose shackles can be broken only by following the dissenters. I will leave it to the readers to decide for themselves whether Paul James Toscano or Gordon B. Hinckley is the true prophet of our time. For me, the choice is quite simple and clear.

22 Ibid.
Index to
Review of Books on the Book of Mormon
1989-94

By Author

The entries in this section are listed by author, title, reviewer (in parentheses), volume number, and beginning page number.


Ankerberg, John, Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism (Daniel C. Peterson), 5:1.

Barlow, Philip L., Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion (Marvin Folsom), 4:1.

Bartley, Peter, Mormonism: The Prophet, the Book and the Cult (Daniel C. Peterson), 2:31.


Beardall, C. Douglas, About the Three Nephites (Richard L. Hill), 5:87.

Beardall, Jewell N., About the Three Nephites (Richard L. Hill), 5:87.


Black, Susan Easton, Finding Christ through the Book of Mormon (Camille Williams), 1:3.


Card, Orson Scott, *The Folk of the Fringe; The Tales of Alvin Maker: Seventh Son; The Red Prophet; Prentice Alvin* (Eugene England), 2:56.


Goff, Alan, "A Hermeneutic of Sacred Texts: Historicism, Revisionism, Positivism, and the Bible and Book of Mormon" (Daniel B. McKinlay), 2:86.


Hales, Robert E., * How to Hiss Forth with the Book of Mormon* (Donald W. Parry), 3:84.
Hales, Sandra L., *How to Hiss Forth with the Book of Mormon* (Donald W. Parry), 3:84.
Hauck, F. Richard, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (William J. Hamblin), 1:71.
Hauck, F. Richard, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Mark V. Withers), 1:78.
Heimerdinger, Chris, *Gadiantons and the Silver Sword: A Novel* (Brent Hall), 4:77.
Helland, Dean Maurice, *Meeting the Book of Mormon Challenge in Chile* (Louis Midgley), 5:116.
Hemmingway, Donald W., *Christianity in America before Columbus?* (Bruce W. Warren), 2:98.


Larson, Charles M., . . . *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Michael D. Rhodes), 4:120.


Lundquist, John M., ed., *By Study and Also by Faith*, vol. 2 (Gregory Dundas), 4:127.


McConkie, Joseph Fielding, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 1*, First and Second Nephi; and vol. 2, Jacob through Mosiah (Louis Midgley), 1:92.

McConkie, Joseph Fielding, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 3*, Alma through Helaman (Michael J. Allen), 4:147.

McConkie, Joseph Fielding, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 3*, Alma through Helaman (Donald W. Parry), 4:139.


Metcalfe, Brent Lee, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity" (William J. Hamblin), 6/1:434.


Metcalfe, Brent Lee, "The Priority of Mosiah: A Prelude to Book of Mormon Exegesis" (Matthew Roper), 6/1:362.

Millet, Robert L., *By Grace Are We Saved* (John Gee), 2:100.


Millet, Robert L., *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 3, Alma through Helaman* (Donald W. Parry), 4:139.

Millet, Robert L., *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 1, First and Second Nephi; and vol. 2, Jacob through Mosiah* (Louis Midgley), 1:92.


Moss, Robert H., *I Nephi . . .—A Novel of the Sons of Lehi; The Covenant Coat—A Novel of Joseph; The Waters of Mormon—A Novel of Alma the Elder; That I Were an Angel, A Novel of Alma the Younger; Title of Liberty, A Novel of Helaman and Moroni; The Abridger, A Novel of

Mulholland, David H., A Reading Guide to the Book of Mormon (Daniel W. Graham), 2:118.


Nibley, Hugh W., Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites; An Approach to the Book of Mormon; Since Cumorah (Todd Compton), 1:114.


Nibley, Hugh W., The Prophetic Book of Mormon (Daniel C. Peterson), 2:164.

Nibley, Hugh W., Since Cumorah (John A. Tvedtnes), 2:175.

Nibley, Hugh W., Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Semester Three Transcripts (David Rolph Seely), 5:190.


Nyman, Monte S., ed., The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy (Scott Woolley), 3:106.


Nyman, Monte S., ed., The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel (Jennifer Clark Lane), 6/2:134.

Nyman, Monte S., An Ensign to All People: The Sacred Message and Mission of the Book of Mormon (L. Gary Lambert), 1:121.

Nyman, Monte S., The Most Correct Book: Why the Book of Mormon Is the Keystone Scripture (Brian M. Hauglid), 4:155.

Parry, Donald W., *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Jo Ann H. Seely), 5:203.


Ricks, Stephen D., ed., *By Study and Also by Faith*, vol. 2 (Gregory Dundas), 4:127.


Sampson, Joe, *Written by the Finger of God: A Testimony of Joseph Smith’s Translations* (Frederick M. Huchel), 6/2:150.


Smith, George D., ed., *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History* (Gary F. Novak), 5:231.


Tanner, Jerald, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (Tom Nibley), 5:273.

Tanner, Jerald, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (L. Ara Norwood), 3:158.


Tanner, Jerald, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (John A. Tvedtne), 3:188.


Tanner, Sandra, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (Tom Nibley), 5:273.

Tanner, Sandra, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (L. Ara Norwood), 3:158.

Tanner, Sandra, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (Matthew Roper), 3:170.

Tanner, Sandra, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (John A. Tvedtnes), 3:188.


Tate, Charles D., Jr., ed., *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy* (Scott Woolley), 3:106.


Tate, Charles D., Jr., ed., *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel* (Jennifer Clark Lane), 6/2:134.


Thorne, Melvin J., ed., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* (Cherry B. Silver), 4:166.


Vogel, Dan, “Anti-Universalist Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon” (Martin Tanner), 6/1:420.


Yorgason, Blaine, *To Mothers and Fathers from the Book of Mormon* (Lynn Nations Johnson), 4:258.


Yorgason, Brenton G., *To Mothers and Fathers from the Book of Mormon* (Lynn Nations Johnson), 4:258.
By Title

The entries in this section are listed by title, author, reviewer (in parentheses), volume number, and beginning page number.

*About the Three Nephites*, by C. Douglas Beardall and Jewell N. Beardall (Richard L. Hill), 5:87.
“Anti-Universalist Rhetoric in the Book of Mormon,” by Dan Vogel (Martin Tanner), 6/1:420.
*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, by Hugh W. Nibley (Todd Compton), 1:114.
*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, by Hugh W. Nibley (William J. Hamblin), 2:119.
*Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner (William J. Hamblin), 5:250.
Are the Mormon Scriptures Reliable? by Wesley P. Walters and Harry L. Ropp (Diane E. Wirth), 2:209.

The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon, by Loftes Tryk (Daniel C. Peterson), 3:231.

Bible II (Royal Skousen), 6/2:1.

The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon, by Avraham Gileadi (Donald W. Parry), 4:52.

The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon, by Avraham Gileadi (Bruce D. Porter), 4:40.


The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Scott Woolley), 3:106.


The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted According to Parallelistic Patterns, by Donald W. Parry (Jo Ann H. Seely), 5:203.
The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Jennifer Clark Lane), 6/2:134.


By Grace Are We Saved, by Robert L. Millet (John Gee), 2:100.

By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri, by Charles M. Larson (John Gee and John L. Sorenson), 4:93.

By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri, by Charles M. Larson (Michael D. Rhodes), 4:120.

By Study and Also by Faith, vol. 2, edited by John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Gregory Dundas), 4:127.

Christianity in America Before Columbus? by Donald W. Hemmingway (Bruce W. Warren), 2:98.


Converted to Christ through the Book of Mormon, by Eugene England (Susan Easton Black), 2:74.


Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner (L. Ara Norwood), 3:158.

Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner (Tom Nibley), 5:273.

Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner (Matthew Roper), 3:170.

Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon, by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner (John A. Tvedtines), 3:188.


Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon, by F. Richard Hauck (John Clark), 1:20.
Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon, by F. Richard Hauck (William J. Hamblin), 1:71.

Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon, by F. Richard Hauck (Mark V. Withers), 1:78.


Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 3, Alma through Helaman, by Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet (Donald W. Parry), 4:139.

Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 1, First and Second Nephi, by Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet (Louis Midgley), 1:92.


Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 4, Third Nephi through Moroni, by Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top (Darrell L. Matthews), 5:183.


El Libro de Mormon ante la crítica, translated and edited by Josué Sánchez (Terrence L. Szink), 5:223.


An Ensign to All People: The Sacred Message and Mission of the Book of Mormon, by Monte S. Nyman (L. Gary Lambert), 1:121.

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism, by John Ankerberg and John Weldon (Daniel C. Peterson), 5:1.

Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History, edited by George D. Smith (Gary F. Novak), 5:231.


Fathers and Sons in the Book of Mormon by E. Douglas Clark and Robert S. Clark (Clark Johnson), 4:29.


Finding Christ through the Book of Mormon, by Susan Easton Black (Camille Williams), 1:3.

Folk of the Fringe, by Orson Scott Card (Eugene England), 2:56.


Gadiantons and the Silver Sword: A Novel, by Chris Heimerdinger (Brent Hall), 4:77.


The God-Inspired Language of the Book of Mormon, by Wade Brown (Donald W. Parry), 1:5.


How to Hiss Forth with the Book of Mormon, by Robert E. Hales and Sandra L. Hales (Donald W. Parry), 3:84.

Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon, by Dan Vogel (Kevin Christensen), 2:214.


Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters (Richard L. Bushman), 6/2:122.

Isaiah Made Easier, by David J. Ridges (Terrence L. Szink), 4:164.


Keys to Successful Scripture Study, by George A. Horton (Patricia Gunter Karamesines), 3:86.


The Lands of Zarahemla, by E. L. Peay (Les Campbell), 6/2:139.


Letters to a Mormon Elder, by James R. White (L. Ara Norwood), 5:317.

Light from the Dust: A Photographic Exploration into the Ancient World of the Book of Mormon, by Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (Fred W. Nelson), 6/2:146.

Little Known Evidences of the Book of Mormon, by Brenton G. Yorgason (Paul Y. Hoskisson), 2:258.


Meeting the Book of Mormon Challenge in Chile, Dean Maurice Helland (Louis Midgley), 5:116.
The Messiah in Ancient America, by Bruce W. Warren and Thomas Stuart Ferguson (Terrence L. Szink), 1:132.
Mormonism: The Prophet, the Book, and the Cult, by Peter Bartley (Daniel C. Peterson), 2:31.
Mormonism: Shadow or Reality? by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner (Matthew Roper), 4:169.
Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology, by O. Kendall White, Jr. (Louis Midgley), 6/2:283.
Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion, by Philip L. Barlow (Marvin Folsom), 4:1.
The Most Correct Book: Why the Book of Mormon Is the Keystone Scripture, by Monte S. Nyman (Brian M. Hauglid), 4:155.
New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, by Brent Lee Metcalfe (Davis Bitton), 6/1:1.
New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, by Brent Lee Metcalfe (John Gee), 6/1:51.
New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, by Brent Lee Metcalfe (Royal Skousen), 6/1:121.
New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, by Brent Lee Metcalfe (John A. Tvedtnes), 6/1:8.
New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, by Brent Lee Metcalfe (John W. Welch), 6/1:145.

Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography, by John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raish (William J. Hamblin), 3:154.

Prentice Alvin, by Orson Scott Card (Eugene England), 2:56.


The Prophetic Book of Mormon, by Hugh W. Nibley (Daniel C. Peterson), 2:164.

A Reading Guide to the Book of Mormon, by David H. Mulholland (Daniel W. Graham), 2:118.

Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Cherry B. Silver), 4:166.

The Red Prophet, by Orson Scott Card (Eugene England), 2:56.

Reexploring the Book of Mormon: The F.A.R.M.S. Updates, edited by John W. Welch (David Rolph Seely), 5:305.


Samuel, Moroni’s Young Warrior, by Clair Poulson (Richard H. Cracroft), 6/2:118.


Seventh Son, by Orson Scott Card (Eugene England), 2:56.

Since Cumorah, by Hugh W. Nibley (Todd Compton), 1:114.

Since Cumorah, by Hugh W. Nibley (John A. Tvedtnes), 2:175.

Southwestern American Indian Rock Art and the Book of Mormon, by James R. Harris, Sr. (Stephen E. Thompson), 4:65.


Strangers in Paradox: Exploration in Mormon Theology, by Margaret Toscano and Paul Toscano (Brian M. Hauglid), 6/2:250.

Studies in Scripture: vol. 8, Alma 30 to Mormon, edited by Kent P. Jackson (Stephen D. Ricks), 1:89.


Tennis Shoes among the Nephites: A Novel, by Chris Heimerdinger (Elouise Bell), 2:96.


To Mothers and Fathers from the Book of Mormon, by Blaine Yorgason and Brenton G. Yorgason (Lynn Nations Johnson), 4:258.

The Truth about Mormonism: A Former Adherent Analyzes the LDS Faith, by Weldon Langfield (Matthew Roper), 4:78.


Warfare in the Book of Mormon, edited by Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (David B. Honey), 3:118.


Written by the Finger of God: A Testimony of Joseph Smith’s Translations, by Joe Sampson (Frederick M. Huchel), 6/2:150.
By Reviewer

The entries in this section are listed by reviewer, author, title, volume number, and beginning page number.


Clark, John, review of F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, 1:20.

Compton, Todd, review of Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites; An Approach to the Book of Mormon; Since Cumorah*, 1:114.


Dundas, Gregory, review of John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also by Faith*, vol. 2, 4:127.


Gee, John, review of Robert L. Millet, *By Grace Are We Saved*, 2:100.


Johnson, Lynn Nations, review of Blaine Yorgason and Brenton G. Yorgason, *To Mothers and Fathers from the Book of Mormon*, 4:258.


Lane, Jennifer Clark, review of Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, 6/2:134.


Parry, Donald W., review of Robert E. Hales and Sandra L. Hales, *How to Hiss Forth with the Book of Mormon*, 3:84.

Parry, Donald W., review of Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: vol. 3, Alma through Helaman*, 4:139.


Rhodes, Michael D., review of Charles M. Larson, *... By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 4:120.


Seely, Jo Ann H., review of Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns*, 5:203.


Skousen, Royal, review of Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, 6/1:121.

Skousen, Royal, review of *Bible II*, 6/2:1.

INDEX BY REVIEWER, 1989–94


Thompson, Stephen E., review of James R. Harris, Sr., *Southwestern American Indian Rock Art and the Book of Mormon*, 4:65.


Tvedtnes, John A., review of Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, 3:188.


Warren, Bruce W., review of Donald W. Hemmingway, *Christianity in America before Columbus?*, 2:98.


Williams, Camille, review of Susan Easton Black, *Finding Christ through the Book of Mormon*, 1:3.


Withers, Mark V., review of F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*, 1:78.

Woolley, Scott, review of Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, 3:106.

By Subject

Akkadian, 6/1:82
Amarna letters, 5:67–68, 5:77, 5:77
American Indians. See Native Americans
Amherst papyrus, 5:45–63
Anti-Christ, 1:14, 2:101, 6/1:12–13
Apocrypha, 4:114–17, 4:122–23
Arabic, 2:172, 2:258
Aramaic, 6/1:11, 6/1:68–70, 6/1:153
Asia, 2:143–53
Authority, 6/1:415
Aztec, 6/1:323, 6/1:328–29, 6/1:331–35
Babel. See Tower of Babel
Baptism, 2:212, 2:252, 5:20, 6/1:45–47, 6/1:76–77, 6/1:192–93,
6/1:367–69, 6/1:391
infant, 4:182
proxy, 4:83
Bat Creek Inscription, 4:22, 4:212, 5:207
Benson, Ezra Taft, 1:vi, 1:1–2, 1:8, 1:121–22, 2:74, 2:77, 2:173,
6/1:232–33, 6/1:500
6/1:3–4, 6/1:11, 6/1:17–18, 6/1:19–23, 6/1:39, 6/1:62,
historicity, 2:175–81, 2:214–57, 6/1:384–90, 6/1:396–412,
6/1:547–48
translations, 2:140
scholarship (see also Documentary hypothesis), 6/1:108–11,
6/1:121–25, 6/1:384–90
Book of Breathings, 4:94, 4:100, 4:105
Book of Mormon
authorship, 2:200, 6/1:v–562
chapters, 6/1:137–40, 6/2:1
criticism (see also Anti-Mormon), 1:vii–x, 2:ix–xv, 2:87–95,
6/2:3–9, 6/2:156–203
editions, 6/2:1–2
5:256–57


translations into other languages, 2:82, 2:264
Calvinism, 5:348–49
Canaanites, 2:140
Censorship, 5:238–40
Central America. See Mesoamerica
Choctaw, 1:19
Cloth, 3:196
Colophon. See also Poetry, 4:167
Columbus, 1:125, 3:97–98, 5:109
Computer, 1:119
Condescension of God, 5:297
Conversion, 1:3–4, 2:74–76, 4:12–19
Coptic, 4:75
Copyright, 2:200
Cosmology, 6/2:3–58
Culture
   Mesoamerican, 3:28, 3:40–43, 3:128
   Mormon, 6/1:206–8
Curses, 2:182

Davidic King, 4:40–51, 4:57
Death, 6/1:108
Deliverance, 4:25
Destruction, 2:78–85
Devil, 3:234, 3:242–43
Didache, 6/1:390–92
Diversity, 6/2:59–78
INDEX BY SUBJECT, 1989–94

Doctrines. See Theology

Documentary hypothesis. See also Bible, scholarship, 2:31, 2:89–95

Documents. See Texts, ancient

Economy, 2:148

Eden, Garden of, 3:222


Episcopalianism, 2:xx

Essenes, 2:140

Evolution, 3:106–8, 5:212–16

FARMS, 1:vi, 1:116–18, 1:126, 2:xxv, 2:40, 2:119, 2:126, 2:234,
2:257, 3:86, 3:118, 5:11–12, 5:34, 5:223–24, 5:305–6,
6/1:v–xii, 6/1:4, 6/1:23, 6/1:114, 6/1:146, 6/1:532–36,
6/2:37, 6/2:119, 6/2:206–7

Facsimile No. 2, 4:109, 4:123–26

Facsimile No. 3, 4:100, 4:109

Faith, 4:126, 6/1:4–6, 6/1:211, 6/2:285–87


Famine, 4:145

Feasts. See Festivals

6/2:223–30

6/2:59–78, 6/2:118–21

Book of Mormon as, 6/1:6, 6/1:200, 6/1:210, 6/1:222–35

Flood, 3:111–15

Food, 2:149, 3:43, 3:160

Free Agency. See Agency

Free Speech, 6/1:531–34

Fundamentalists, 5:49

Gematria, 4:58


distances, 1:76, 1:25–58, 1:120
typology, 1:67–70

Gnosticism, 2:140, 2:175
Gold plates. See Plates
Grace, 2:100–106, 5:343–50


Harvest, 3:1–31

Hell, 2:29, 5:301–3
Hellenism, 1:viii, 1:127
Hermeticism, 6/2:12–58

Homosexuality, 6/2:71–73
Horse, 2:148–49, 3:43, 4:208, 6/1:10, 6/1:344

Idolatry, 6/1:5–7
Imagery. See Symbolism

Immorality, 6/1:537–42

Indians. See Native Americans
Institute for Religious Research, 4:93
Iraq, 2:137


Israelites, 2:92–93, 2:121–22, 6/1:269–70

Jews, 1:3, 2:180, 2:201
Kabbalah, 6/2:150–55
Kinderhook plates, 2:210–11, 4:252–53
Koran, 2:xv–xix, 3:143, 5:59
Land, promised, 6/2:82–93
Linen, 3:180
Literature, 2:107–17
Lucifer, 3:234, 3:242–43
Magic, 2:58–62, 5:143–45
Manuscript found. See Spalding Manuscript
Materialism, 5:192–93, 6/1:328
Melchizedek, 6/1:19–23, 6/1:170–74
Military. See Warfare

Mongolia, 2:229–31, 4:210


Names, places, 1:85–88, 2:24, 2:76, 3:195


Near East. See Culture, Near Eastern


Newark Stones, 5:70


Olmec, 2:46, 3:36–37, 6/1:320, 6/1:355–59

Opposition, 2:60, 2:183, 2:252, 3:158, 3:270

Ordinances, 2:81

Parahyba text, 5:269

Parallelism. See also Poetry, 1:5–9, 1:10–17, 2:13, 4:53, 5:202–8, 6/1:178–79
Parallels, Transoceanic. See Transoceanic comparisons
Passover, 6/1:388
Personal names. See Names, people
Petroglyphs, 4:65, 4:72
Pioneers, 5:195
Piute Indians, 1:129–31
Place names. See Names, places
Politics, 5:97–99
  grain, 2:49–50
  metal, 2:48–49
  people, 6/1:266–68
  plants, 6/1:335–42
Prejudice. See Agenda
Pre–Hispanic. See Pre-Columbian
Pride, 3:111–12, 5:295
Priestcraft, 4:183
Priesthood, 4:161, 6/1:23, 6/2:259–82
Prophets, 2:58, 2:84, 2:115–16, 6/1:199, 6/1:452–56
Pseudepigrapha, 4:122
Qur'an. See Koran
Records. See Texts, ancient
Religious Studies Center, 2:185–86
Remembrance, 6/1:400–403
Renaissance, 6/2:3–58
Repentance, 5:292–93
Repetition, 2:165
Restoration, 2:165, 3:265, 3:271, 4:15, 6/1:413, 6/2:3–9
Resurrection, 3:11, 3:35, 6/1:75–76
Revival, 4:179
Rhetoric, 6/1:418–33
Riches, 5:192–93, 6/1:328
Rituals. See Festivals
Salvation, 5:343–50, 6/1:424–33
Satan, 3:234, 3:242–43
Scripture, 6/1:228–42
Scrolls. See Texts, ancient
Second Coming, 3:102–3
Second death, 5:302
Secret combinations, 4:184
Secular humanism, 4:vii–lxxv, 4:5, 4:144, 6/1:v–562
Sermon at the Temple, 3:319–22, 6/1:152–68
Sermon on the Mount, 3:319–22, 6/1:121, 6/1:152–68
Serpents, 3:43
Smithsonian statement, 4:204, 5:258–59
Society for Early Historic Archaeology, 4:117–18
Spirit world, 5:202
Spiritual death, 5:302–4
Sumerian, 6/1:82
Synagogues, 2:177
Three Nephites, 5:87–92
Title page, 2:191, 6/1:189, 6/1:225, 6/2:179–80
Tower of Babel, 2:145, 2:227, 2:246
Treaty/Covenant pattern, 1:90–98, 1:106–7
Tree of life, 2:177–80, 3:15–16, 6/2:76
Truth, 2:181, 6/1:9–10
Types. See Symbolism

Uniformitarianism, 5:214–15
Universalism, 2:223, 6/1:12–13, 6/1:418–33

View of the Hebrews. See Spalding Manuscript
Washington, George, 1:125, 3:270
Wealth, 2:181
Wordprints, 4:216
Writing, 5:260–65

About the Reviewers

Ross David Baron earned a B.S. from Brigham Young University in finance. He serves as director of the Glendora Institute of Religion in Southern California and is also a graduate student at the University of Southern California in the Philosophy of Religion and Social Ethics program.

Garold N. Davis received his Ph.D. in German literature from Johns Hopkins University. He taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Southern Oregon College, and the University of Colorado before coming to Brigham Young University, where he is currently professor of German and comparative literature.

Marvin Folsom, retired professor of German linguistics at Brigham Young University, earned a Ph.D. in Germanic linguistics from Cornell University (1961).

John Gee received his M.A. from the University of California at Berkeley and is a doctoral candidate in Near Eastern languages and civilizations at Yale University. Gee has worked for the Department of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

Alan Goff earned a Doctor of Arts degree in the humanities from the University of Albany; his course of study was the peculiar conjunction of philosophy and literary criticism that is literary theory. He teaches English at Glendale Community College in Arizona.

William J. Hamblin received his Ph.D. in history at the University of Michigan following advanced studies in Arabic in Cairo. He is currently associate professor of history at Brigham Young University.

LeIsle Jacobson received her B.S. degree in preprofessional nutrition from Brigham Young University. She is currently a homemaker and serves as an online service consultant.

Mark J. Johnson is pursuing a degree in English and literature at Salt Lake Community College. A graduate of the University of
Utah Institute of Religion, he is currently a research assistant at that location.

Louis Midgley, professor of political science at Brigham Young University, teaches the history of political philosophy. He specialized in contemporary philosophical theology at Brown University, where he received his Ph.D.

L. Ara Norwood, B.A., is a managing partner in PanOptics, a southern California-based research and development firm providing leadership training and system dynamics seminars to business professionals.

Gary F. Novak, M.A., is manager of the Information Processing Center at Rio Salado Community College in Arizona. He has taught computer science and published several essays concerning the logic of explanation in the understanding of Mormon scripture and history.

Daniel C. Peterson earned a Ph.D. in Near Eastern languages and cultures from the University of California at Los Angeles and currently teaches Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University.

Mack C. Stirling received his M.D. in 1979 from Johns Hopkins University and trained in surgery and cardiothoracic surgery at the University of Michigan. Formerly assistant professor of surgery at the University of Michigan, Dr. Stirling is currently the director of cardiothoracic surgery at the Munson Medical Center in Traverse City, Michigan.

Camille S. Williams received both an M.A. in English language and a J.D. from Brigham Young University. She is a part-time instructor in the Philosophy Department at Brigham Young University and teaches a family law class for the Department of Family Sciences.