TO OUR READERS:

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) encourages and supports research about the Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, and other ancient scriptures.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation, independent of all other organizations. Its main research interests include ancient history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to the scriptures. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of the scriptures, solid research and academic perspectives alone can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about the scriptures.

It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to “come unto Christ” (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The principal purpose of the FARMS Review of Books is to help serious readers make informed choices and judgments about books published, primarily on the Book of Mormon. The evaluations are intended to encourage reliable scholarship on the Book of Mormon.

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

The opinions expressed in these reviews are those of 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.

FARMS Review of Books
(formerly Review of Books on the Book of Mormon)
is published semiannually.
© 1996 Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
ISSN 1050-7930
CONTENTS

Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... v

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Hedengren, Paul, *The Land of Lehi*  
(John E. Clark) ........................................................ ................................................................. 1

Millet, Robert L., *The Power of the Word: Saving Doctrines from the Book of Mormon*  
(Dennis H. Karpowitz) ......................................................................................................................... 25

Pearson, Glenn L., *Moroni’s Promise: The Converting Power of the Book of Mormon*  
(Phillip R. Kunz) .................................................................................................................................. 32

Salinmer, Joseph R., and Norrene V. Salinmer, *I Know Thee by Name: Hebrew Roots of Lehi-ite Non-Biblical Names in the Book of Mormon*  
(John A. Tvedtnes) ............................................................................................................................... 34

OTHER SCRIPTURES AND ANCIENT TEXTS

DeMaris, Richard E., “Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead  
(1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology”  
(John W. Welch) .................................................................................................................................. 43

Harris, James R., *The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Study of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*  
Silverman, David P., ed., *For His Ka: Essays Offered in Memory of Klaus Baer*  
Peterson, H. Donl, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism*  
(John Gee) ............................................................................................................................................ 46
OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Ankerberg, John, and John Weldon, *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*  
(Daniel C. Peterson) ................................................. 60

Beckwith, Francis J., and Stephen E. Parrish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis*  
(Blake T. Ostler) .................................................. 99

Brodie, Fawn McKay, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*  
(Louis Midgley) .................................................. 147

McKeever, Bill, and Eric Johnson, *Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend: Challenging the Claims of Latter-day Saints in a Constructive Manner*  
(D. Charles Pyle) ............................................... 231

Owens, Lance S., “Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection”  
(William J. Hamblin) ........................................... 251

Tanner, Jerald, and Sandra Tanner, “Joseph Smith’s Use of the Apocrypha”  
(John A. Tvedtines and Matthew Roper) ........................ 326

PUBLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN

Bagley, Pat, *Norman the Nephite’s and Larry the Lamanite’s Book of Mormon Time Line*  
(Ted L. Gibbons) ................................................ 373

Johnson, Sherrie, *My First Scripture Stories*  
(Elaine A. Andelin) ............................................. 375

STUDY AIDS

*Book of Mormon Reference Library* (CD-ROM)  
*Book of Mormon Studybase* (CD-ROM)  
*LDS Collectors Library 1995 Edition* (CD-ROM)  
(Alan C. Ashton) .................................................... 377

1995 Book of Mormon Bibliography .................................. 397

About the Reviewers ................................................ 413
Editor's Introduction: 
Doubting the Doubters

Daniel C. Peterson

The writing of reviews, and the editing of them, can be a thankless task. Some people think the very activity unchristian. The authors being reviewed, of course, are understandably skittish about critics, and seldom are they altogether pleased with the results. Even those of us who work at the task of reviewing are conscious of the often subjective nature of the enterprise. Criticism of our fellow human beings, it has been said, is often merely the disapproval of people not for having faults but for having faults different from ours. It can be so with the criticism of books, as well.

Nevertheless, criticism and reviewing are certainly useful, in much the same way that weeding is useful. Granted that some gardeners—especially the botanically challenged, like myself—not infrequently pull up perfectly good flowers along with the weeds, still the garden will do better (on balance) with a gardener than without one. With regard to books, of course, the most important critic is time. Homer has been appreciated for nearly three millennia; many highly touted novels last only a few months and are then mercifully forgotten. Ultimately, the capacity of the critic to do either good or ill is probably much less than he imagines or than his targets fear.

It is important to note, however, that the job in gardening is not only to pull weeds. The gardener’s task is to nourish and encourage beautiful flowers and to display them, to cultivate nutritious fruits and vegetables and to harvest them. The analogy breaks down a bit here, because reviewers, qua reviewers, probably do very little to nourish and to cultivate good books. Authors do that. By helping to prune away the bad, though, perhaps critics clear the ground for better writing to prosper, and perhaps their
criticisms help future writers to avoid the mistakes of their predecessors. (I confess that prolonged exposure to anti-Mormon literature has made me a little less confident on this score than I once was.) Indisputably, reviewers can call attention to good books and articles, and they can certainly participate in the harvesting of good literary fruit.

Critics have not always, of course, been known primarily for their zeal to harvest and display good work. They have often been somewhat morose, even dyspeptic. “As a rule,” wrote G. K. Chesterton in 1909, “there is no difference between the critic and [the] ascetic except that the ascetic sorrows with a hope and the critic without a hope.” This is perhaps one of the reasons why the word criticism has taken on so generally negative a hue. We at the FARMS Review of Books, however, have considerable hope. The gospel is true, the kingdom is rolling forth, and much good scholarship and writing has been and is being produced by believing Latter-day Saints.

I should like to showcase some of that scholarship and writing. As I have done in recent issues of the Review, I shall identify texts or items treated in the present issue, and shall offer my own bottom-line ratings. I have formulated these evaluations on the basis of the reviews published herein, occasionally informed by my own direct acquaintance with the materials or by further conversations with the relevant reviewers. The judgments remain subjective, in the final analysis, and they are unnuanced and imprecise, but I shall do my best. (For more nuanced discussion, obviously, readers should turn to the reviews themselves.) First, an explanation of the rating system:

**Editor’s Picks**

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

*** Enthusiastically recommended.

** Warmly recommended.

* Recommended.

---

With that out of the way, we can now proceed directly to the ratings. First a drum roll, then the opening of the envelope, and then, without distracting comment, the results (for whatever they may be worth):

* *Book of Mormon Studybase (CD-ROM)*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995.

**Evolving Developments**

I want to draw attention to several other books, as well. They have not received reviews here, and very probably will not, but they have provided me some high-grade intellectual entertainment in recent months and I think others beside myself may well find them interesting.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies does not have an official position on the question of organic evolution. We certainly do not have an officially negative position. Indeed, I fully know the opinion on the matter of only one member of the FARMS Board of Trustees, and he is a convinced evolutionist. This Review, moreover, has published only one article dealing with evolution, and that article proceeded from an avowedly pro-evolutionary stance.

---

Evolution is not a question over which I myself have lost much sleep. I have, for years, been pretty much an agnostic on the subject. Nevertheless, since a more or less Darwinian evolutionary theory is important to virtually every form of modern naturalism or antisupernaturalism, I have occasionally given a glance in its direction. "The entire scientific ethos and philosophy of modern western man," notes Michael Denton,

is based on a large extent upon the central claim of Darwinian theory that humanity was not born by the creative intentions of a deity but by a completely mindless trial and error selection of random molecular patterns. The cultural importance of evolution theory is therefore immeasurable, forming as it does the centrepiece, the crowning achievement, of the naturalistic view of the world, the final triumph of the secular thesis which since the end of the middle ages has displaced the old naive cosmology of Genesis from the western mind. . . . [T]oday it is perhaps the Darwinian view of nature more than any other that is responsible for the agnostic and sceptical outlook of the twentieth century.³

There is a great deal, an inexpressibly great deal, resting on the question of whether this universe is a closed system of atoms and the void—a system in which all can be explained without residue as merely matter in ultimately pointless motion. Shakespeare’s Macbeth, burdened with bloody sin and looking unrepentantly into the face of death, summed that view up eloquently:

Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.⁴

⁴ *Macbeth*, 5.5.24–28 (Rowse).
I have been surprised, in recent years, to notice what I now suspect is a growing tendency among very good and reputable thinkers to question evolutionary dogma. I had naively assumed that, conservative Latter-day Saints and fundamentalist Protestants aside, all educated people—certainly all intellectuals—accepted evolution. I was immensely surprised, therefore, when, in talking with him repeatedly over the summer of 1990, I began to realize that Huston Smith, the eminent authority on world religions, is an outspoken critic of the theory of evolution. He is far from being a Christian fundamentalist and, with his impeccable academic credentials (including years of teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), he is nothing at all like the backwoods bumpkin creationists that I had been led to imagine were the only folks who rejected Darwinism. Yet there he is.

Since that time, I have watched with mounting interest what I see as the emergence of an intellectual critique of evolution that has little if any link to Protestant fundamentalism or, indeed, directly to religion of any kind. It cannot be dismissed as a reprise of the infamous Scopes Monkey Trial. It features neither simplistic appeals to the authority of scripture nor sermonizing on the fact that my grandpappy wasn’t a monkey. So far as I can see, it offers up no conveniently ignorant William Jennings Bryan to be fatally humiliated by a new Clarence Darrow.

Norman Macbeth’s *Darwin Retried* was the first book I read on the subject, and I was intrigued by the logical case he constructed against Darwinian evolution. Michael Denton’s *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* argued, on the basis of a lengthy analysis ranging from molecular biology to paleontology, that “the problems [with evolutionary theory] are too severe and too intractable to offer any hope of resolution in terms of the orthodox Darwinian framework.” Phillip Johnson, a prominent law professor at the University of California at Berkeley, subjected the theory of evolution to calm but withering criticism in his *Darwin on Trial* and followed it up with his important book *Reason in the

---

Within just the past few months, David Berlinski, a mathematician and philosopher who has taught in both the United States and France, has written a fascinating piece on “The Deniable Darwin” for *Commentary.* Finally, Michael Behe, who teaches biochemistry at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, has just published a new book entitled *Darwin's Black Box.* In it, he contends that the astonishing complexity of the cell, which we have only begun to appreciate in recent decades, is impossible to explain on the basis of the gradualistic changes assumed by evolutionary theory. Rather, he says, the structure of the cell must have been purposefully devised by an intelligent designer—whether that designer be God or some other vastly intelligent and powerful being or beings.

What is the relevance of this? I am, as I have said, largely unconcerned with the truth or falsity of the theory of evolution. I think it possible, though not at all certain, that the central principles of the restored gospel can ultimately be reconciled with some modified form of evolution. But since faith in a blind evolutionary process is essential to the most common forms of naturalism, which are in turn among the chief enemies of belief in the gospel, I must admit that these recent writings have put me in exceptionally good spirits. I am pleased that some are beginning to recognize that evolution can itself be just as much a faith commitment and a world view as any religion, and can be just as dogmatically held, for reasons that are just as susceptible to psychological reduction, as a religion can be. "One might have expected," observes Michael Denton,
that a theory of such cardinal importance, a theory that literally changed the world, would have been something more than metaphysics, something more than a myth. Ultimately the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century. Like the Genesis based cosmology which it replaced, and like the creation myths of ancient man, it satisfies the same deep psychological need for an all embracing explanation for the origin of the world which has motivated all the cosmogenic myth makers of the past, from the shamans of primitive peoples to the ideologues of the medieval church.\footnote{11}

I commend the books by Macbeth, Denton, Johnson, and Behe, and the article by Berlinski, to anybody interested in evolution, or in the broader question of whether good science commits us to a world view that excludes God. They make a powerful case for the proposition that rational people can be theists, believers in an intelligent and purposeful creator. This is a valuable contribution. After all, if one is convinced that a purposeful cosmos is an impossibility, there is little reason to look at the particular claims of any specific religion. Such claims will have already been destroyed by the one universal solvent, blind evolution. For those who are inclined to think along such lines, perhaps overawed by the sheer weight of the scientific authority that seems to be arrayed against theistic belief, it is pleasant to know that the foundation of evolutionary theory, which itself lies at the foundation of modern naturalism, may not be wholly secure. Not a few serious and reasonable observers have concluded, with Michael Denton, that “after a century of intensive effort biologists have failed to validate it in any significant sense.”\footnote{12}

While I am on the issue, permit me also to commend a book by Hugh Ross, an astrophysicist/cosmologist and former postdoctoral fellow at the California Institute of Technology, entitled

\footnotesize{rejection of religion prepared the way for their acceptance of evolution, rather than the other way around.}

\footnote{11}{Denton, \textit{Evolution}, 358.}

\footnote{12}{Ibid., 357.}
The Creator and the Cosmos. Dr. Ross has established an organization in southern California called "Reasons to Believe," which specializes in often quite intriguing scientific apologetics for a conservative form of Christianity. Like Professor Behe, he argues for the presence of intelligent design in the universe.

Finally, I shall recommend with considerable enthusiasm a pair of books about the greatest miracle of them all, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ: The volume Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead? supplies the text of a debate between Antony Flew and Gary Habermas about the historicity of Christ’s resurrection, accompanied by the postdebate comments of several prominent thinkers of various persuasions. Reading it, I was genuinely surprised to realize how strong the historical case for the resurrection is. (And, I must say, I was delighted to see a well-known and widely respected atheist philosopher get thoroughly thumped on this issue by a little-known professor of philosophy at a small Christian college.) Last, but certainly not least, I heartily endorse Stephen Davis’s wonderful recent book, Risen Indeed. A philosophy professor in Claremont, California, Davis argues forcefully and rigorously for the plausibility of Christ’s resurrection as a genuine event in nonmetaphorical history.

It need scarcely be said that, if Jesus is alive, naturalism is dead.

But There Are Still Weeds to Be Pulled

We now turn briefly from the sublime to the, well, less sublime. In the recently published second volume of their Answering Mormon Scholars, Jerald and Sandra Tanner devote nearly four pages to a rather ponderous discussion of an anonymous parody

15 Stephen T. Davis, Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). I might add here that I consider at least some of the vast literature on so-called “Near Death Experiences” a significant and, thus far, unanswered challenge to the naturalistic world view.
of their work that appeared in the spring of 1996. Neither their discussion nor the unsigned spoof is of lasting cosmic significance. Still, I think one important fact does emerge from this episode.

Using the same techniques that they have elsewhere employed in their ongoing attempt to demonstrate that portions of the Book of Mormon were dishonestly cribbed from, say, Josiah Priest or Ethan Smith or even the King James Bible, the Tanners point to Tom Nibley as the secret author of the parody. At one point, in fact, without actually naming the notorious miscreant by name, they even suggest that Daniel Peterson collaborated with Nibley in this matter. To strengthen their hypothesis, they point to thematic and other parallels between Tom Nibley’s published writing and the parody, and they allude to Professor Peterson’s reputed knowledge of matters Islamic, which, they suspect, is reflected in the unsigned send-up.

Their arguments are interesting. They are plausible. They do seem to indicate that Nibley and Peterson were involved. The only real problem with the Tanners’ arguments is that they are completely misguided. I can say with some confidence, and even with some regret, that Professor Peterson had never heard of the parody until after its completion. Furthermore, I happen, now, to know the actual identity of the spoof’s author. Tom Nibley is innocent.

What should interest students of the Tanners and their works here is that when, in this case, they focused their usual literary investigative techniques on a question where the right answer can be known (by me and a few others, at least) with absolute certainty, they got it all wrong. They weren’t even very close. Accordingly, their seemingly significant parallels are, in fact, meaningless and misleading. Is this important? I think it is. The Tanners’ performance on this small but revealing matter hints that their (quite similar) approach to Latter-day Saint scripture, on the basis of which they ask members of the Church to abandon faith in the restored

16 Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, Answering Mormon Scholars: A Response to Criticism Raised by Mormon Defenders, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1996), 16–20. Copies of the parody can perhaps (who knows?) be obtained directly from the Tanners. I am sure that they would be grateful for any expressions of interest.
gospel, is open to serious doubt. A useful bit of data, that, and well worth my being unjustly accused as, in effect, an unindicted co-conspirator.

**Appreciation and Explanation**

As usual with the *Review*, many people have contributed time and effort to making it work. Alison V. P. Coutts, William J. Hamblin, Noel B. Reynolds, Shirley S. Ricks, Melvin J. Thorne, and John W. Welch offered excellent editorial assistance and many valuable suggestions. (I adopted some, and rashly rejected others.) Marc-Charles Ingerson, Andrew D. Taylor, and Jeffrey W. Dauterman helped with source checking and in making recommendations to better the reviews. Michael P. Lyon assisted in preparing the accompanying figures. Paul Hoskisson came in handy at a crucial point in the process. And, as always, there are the reviewers, without whom the editor would look a little silly. My thanks to them all.

We employ the abbreviations that are customary in Latter-day Saint publishing. The *Journal of Discourses* appears as *JD*, while *TPJS* refers to *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *HC* denotes B. H. Roberts’s compilation of the *History of the Church* (which is commonly but incorrectly referred to as the *Documentary History of the Church*) and *CHC* denotes *Comprehensive History of the Church* (written by B. H. Roberts).

Reviewed by John E. Clark

Two Points of Book of Mormon Geography:
A Review

If books came with warning labels, all treatises\(^1\) on Book of Mormon geography would carry the warning *caveat lector*: Reader Beware! Every such study that I have read presents an undifferentiated blend of scripture, testimony, zealous opinion, sound and naive arguments, flimsy evidence, and unfulfilled and unrealistic expectations. Even the best are deficient; even the worst contain slivers of silver among the dross. Paul Hedengren’s *The Land of Lehi* typifies the genre on all counts. Readers of this book need to be wary; they should sift through its contents with caution and with considerable attention to subtle details. Hedengren’s study is not the best I have seen, but neither is it the worst.

Although I disagree with the conclusions of *The Land of Lehi*, I strongly recommend it to all Book of Mormon geography enthusiasts. Hedengren does several things well and should receive due credit. In general, he argues clearly and explicitly for a limited Great Lakes geography centered in present-day Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York. Numerous maps aid Hedengren’s argument by making detailed descriptions explicit and memorable. One of the best features of the book is the patent distinction made among assumptions, various kinds of evidence, inferences, and conclusions. This expository courtesy allows the skeptical reader to follow the details of each argument—and to agree or disagree at any point. All Book of

\(^1\) The same is true, of course, of all critiques and reviews of these same geographies, such as this one.
Mormon geographies could benefit by being reader-friendly in this manner.

A detailed and critical consideration of each claim in *The Land of Lehi* would entail a treatment at least twice as long as the original. Therefore, I will content myself here with two salient issues from Hedengren’s book: one substantive and one theoretical. I will consider Hedengren’s substantive argument for the location of Cumorah and his methodological argument for the construction and testing of Book of Mormon geography. My abbreviated treatment of just two issues from the many available should be sufficient to demonstrate both strong and weak aspects of Hedengren’s overall argument and to identify several significant but unresolved issues involved in writing Book of Mormon geographies. Before turning to these issues, however, I first present a brief synopsis of *The Land of Lehi* and its basic argument.

**Synopsis of the Book**

*The Land of Lehi* is a concise book composed of eight chapters, a postscript, a question-and-answer section, and a loose insert of additional questions and answers. Chapter 1 is only two pages long, but it establishes the importance of the questions asked in the volume and some of the rules for proceeding. Chapter 2 treats Lehi’s travels from Jerusalem to Bountiful. Hedengren rejects traditional wisdom concerning Lehi’s travel route from Jerusalem (pp. 3-11) and the location of the Old World Bountiful, the embarkation point for the New World. He marshals a variety of information concerning the distribution of mineral deposits, plant and animal life, and evidence of ancient trails (pp. 11-14). Hedengren argues that Lehi and his company sailed from the Arabian Sea around the tip of Africa, across the Atlantic Ocean, and probably into Chesapeake Bay. The reason for this rather unusual sailing route becomes apparent in chapter 3, which is a detailed argument for the location of Cumorah.

As with all such exercises, Cumorah is the linchpin for Hedengren’s Book of Mormon geography. He argues that the hill Cumorah of the final battles is the one near Palmyra, New York, from which Joseph Smith obtained the gold plates in 1827. I will examine this important claim in detail below. Suffice it to say that
all subsequent geographic claims in *The Land of Lehi* follow logically from this primary inference. In chapter 4, Hedengren presents a detailed map of Lehite lands and identifies Book of Mormon cities and landmarks with points of geography in present-day Pennsylvania and New York. For example, the Sidon River is identified with the Susquehanna and Zarahemla with West Pittston, Pennsylvania. Hedengren also considers information on mineral deposits, climate, flora and fauna, agricultural potential, and hydrology. He argues that the distribution of these basic resources and natural conditions conforms to the requirements of Book of Mormon lands mentioned in the text. One could argue endlessly about these specific claims, but I will not do so here. They are only relevant if the primary claim of a New York Cumorah can be sustained, and I will examine this claim in detail in the following section.

In chapter 5, Hedengren discusses Nephite migrations. The distribution of Indian languages in his area of proposed Book of Mormon lands is said to support his hypothesis. At the time of European colonization, Iroquoian speakers occupied all the lands of Hedengren’s proposed geography. Presumably, Iroquoian speakers are descendants of the Nephites and Lamanites who once inhabited the area. Hedengren also proposes cultural similarities between these groups and Book of Mormon peoples. Chapter 6 extends the analysis of the previous chapter and deals with adjacent Lamanite territories. Hedengren shows that archaeological evidence for the distribution of different house types conforms to the north/south division between Nephite and Lamanite lands that one would expect from the Book of Mormon.

The final two chapters, postscript, and question-and-answer sections treat a miscellany of issues. Chapter 7 presents the case for Nephite fortifications and their correspondence with ancient earthworks and fortifications known from the New York/Pennsylvania area. As all enthusiasts realize, the correspondences are remarkable. But Hedengren fails to mention two significant points that have always troubled this particular data set. First, this is precisely the body of evidence that Joseph Smith’s detractors

---

2 The logic follows from this initial inference as well as from a particular reading of each relevant verse of the Book of Mormon.
paraded to demonstrate that he had made it all up based upon local folklore. Second, and more important, none of these fortifications is known to date to the Book of Mormon time period.

Chapter 8 is a miscellaneous catalogue of what Hedengren labels “additional harmonies.” He provides a logical explanation for the awkward phrase going into the mountain (Alma 47:10, 12), based upon local, Pennsylvania geography; discusses the prevalence of pearls in his proposed area; notes that grapes were prevalent in this same area but would have been absent from Central America; discusses tree cultivation, corn, and barley; emphasizes land-use patterns among the earliest farmers in the eastern United States (Adena-Hopewell); and demonstrates that all minerals mentioned in the Book of Mormon are found in this area of North America. Further supposed harmonies concern flimsy evidence for elephants, land-use and population increases, reasons for the lack of archaeological evidence for extensive populations (wooden buildings would not have left many traces), and a detailed discussion of “a small neck of land” (Alma 22:32).

The postscript is a mere half page in length and summarily cautions the reader not to take the book’s proposals for facts. Hedengren wisely advises that

The history of Book of Mormon geographies is clouded by enthusiasm and hasty generalizations. Nothing that is proposed here should be taken too seriously, but should instead be viewed more as guides to further research. (p. 83)

This sage advice could and should also be extended to cover Hedengren’s techniques of discovery and evaluation of generalizations.

In the question-and-answer section, Hedengren addresses seventeen questions that the inquisitive reader might be likely to raise after reading this book. Among the more interesting are the following: “3. If the Nephites lived in the area proposed, why is snow not mentioned in the Book of Mormon?” “4. Are your sources credible?” “5. Why have you not compared your theories with alternatives?” “12. Why have you not considered southern Mexico or Central America to be the site of the events in the
Book of Mormon?" and "17. Where might Moroni have wandered after hiding the plates for the last time?"

Cumorah as a Geographic Key

All recent geographies of the Book of Mormon can be divided into variants according to their initial assumptions concerning (1) the scale of Book of Mormon lands and (2) the location of Cumorah. The first division is between those advocating "limited" or small-scale geographies versus Pan-American geographies. The second division cleaves on the controversy between one Cumorah or two. The first division has, for all intents and purposes, been resolved. Only a few die-hards still advocate the folklore version of Book of Mormon geography that imagines a Pan-American geography with the location of Cumorah in New York, the narrow neck of land in Panama, and the land southward as South America. This traditional view simply cannot be supported with the internal evidence from the Book of Mormon, which clearly indicates that the lands of the Nephites and Lamanites had to be much more limited in extent, perhaps similar in size to the Holy Land of the New Testament.

The second rift of opinion continues unresolved and is evident in each year’s crop of limited Book of Mormon geographies. One brand argues for Mexico and Central America as the probable location of Book of Mormon lands. To make this argument, each author claims that the hill Cumorah of upstate New York is not the ancient Cumorah/Ramah mentioned in the Book of Mormon as the site of the final battles. In other words, two hills are known to Mormons as “Cumorah”; hence the “two Cumorahs” label. On the other hand, a series of recent geographies advocates variants of a limited New York or Great Lakes thesis and takes as its point of departure the known location of the singular hill Cumorah.3

To overpolemicize a nest of complex issues, the Central American thesis has the bulk of textual and scientific evidence on

its side, but the New York thesis has the sanction of Church tradition on its side. (What a terrible choice for a gospel hobbyist to have to make!) Those arguing for a Central American Cumorah emphasize statements from the Book of Mormon and tend to disregard statements attributed to General Authorities on geography matters. In contrast, those arguing the New York thesis tend to do the opposite; they stress modern statements, however ambiguous, and pay lip service to the internal evidence from the Book of Mormon. Common ground eludes both camps, and the two groups disagree about what should count as primary evidence, how various classes of evidence should be weighed and evaluated, and what the logical bases for deriving sound inferences from evidence ought to be.

Hedengren’s argument for Cumorah is extraordinary and refreshing precisely because it claims to establish the New York Cumorah as the Cumorah/Ramah of the Book of Mormon on the basis of primary textual evidence from the Book of Mormon itself rather than from nebulous traditions ascribing such a belief to Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and their associates. In short, Hedengren relies on the technique of textual exegesis, employed by advocates of the Central American thesis, to establish the primary claim central to the New York thesis. Given the importance of this argument to Hedengren’s proposed geographic correlation, and its potential importance to continuing intelligent debate about Cumorah, I will examine it in detail here.

As noted, Hedengren grapples with the Cumorah question in his third chapter. He puts the problem and central issues succinctly.

We know where the Lehites began their journey: Jerusalem. We also know precisely where Joseph Smith received the gold plates: on a hill near his home near Palmyra, New York. Is this hill the hill referred to in the Book of Mormon as Cumorah? If it is, this fact is critical to determining where the events described in the Book of Mormon occurred. (p. 19)

Hedengren then proceeds to establish the following three critical claims: (1) "Joseph Smith obtained the gold plates written by Mormon and Moroni from a hill not far from Palmyra, New
York” (p. 19). (2) “The place where Moroni buried the plates is the very place where Joseph Smith received them” (p. 19). (3) “The place in which Moroni buried the plates is the hill Cumorah referred to in the Book of Mormon” (p. 20).

The first two claims are clearly supportable, but the third is not, and it is the crux of the whole issue. Hedengren’s evidence for its truth comes from a methodical analysis of Moroni’s story as the lone survivor of the Nephite race. His analysis demonstrates that Moroni must have resided for most of his postwar years in the vicinity of the hill Cumorah/Ramah until he completed his record. Hedengren’s analysis is inherently interesting and important and merits detailed recitation here. Most Central American theories, for example, postulate that Moroni began his wanderings soon after the Nephite apocalypse and that he had several decades to wander into upstate New York and hide the plates there. Hedengren’s analysis effectively removes this facile explanation by tethering Moroni to the Nephite records repository. Unfortunately, however, in the final analysis Hedengren’s demonstration fails to establish convincingly his third claim that the New York hill is Cumorah/Ramah.

Hedengren notes that Moroni felt on three different occasions that he had completed his record: “first in AD 401 when he finishes the book begun by his father (Mormon 8:1–6); second when he finishes the book of Ether (Ether 12:38); third in AD 423 when he finishes the book of Moroni (Moroni 10:1)” (p. 20). Hedengren’s analysis, although plausible, is overly compromised by unjustified and liberal conjecture. Lengthy citation of his argument will demonstrate this tendency as well as establish its major claims.

When he is finishing his father’s account, Moroni says,

I have but a few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father. Therefore I will write and hide up the records and whither I go it mattereth not. How long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not.

(Mormon 8:1, 4)[emphasis in original]
Moroni then records the final few events following the complete destruction of the Nephite armies, writes a farewell and the book ends. *It seems that at this point Moroni would have quickly hidden the record and wandered off.* If he kept the gold plates with him and he were discovered and killed by Lamanites, they would have destroyed the record.

Furthermore, at this point, Moroni clearly does not expect to add to the record . . .

After finishing the record of his father, apparently in obedience to his command, *it is reasonable to expect* Moroni to end the Book of Mormon. And *it is also reasonable to think* that Moroni would have hidden the plates as quickly as possible to keep them from being found by Lamanites. However, the Book of Mormon does not end with Moroni's farewell in chapter 9. Two more books are included in the Book of Mormon, the book of Ether and the book of Moroni. When were they added, and what does their addition tell us about where the plates were hidden?

The book of Ether is an abridgment of the history of the Jaredites. It appears that the Lord commanded Moroni to add this history to the Book of Mormon. When Moroni is writing Mormon chapters 8 and 9, his father Mormon is already dead and the text indicates that Moroni is not expecting to write further, for he refers to going wandering and he finishes writing, as he says, "this sad tale of destruction of my people." (Mormon 8:3,4) (pp. 20-21)\(^4\)

Hedengren proceeds to demonstrate from internal evidence in the book of Ether that Moroni was probably commanded by the Lord to abridge the Jaredite record. When did this abridgment take place? Hedengren argues that it must have been after Moroni finished his father's record in A.D. 401 and before he completed his own book in A.D. 421.

\(^{4}\) In this and all subsequent citations, the emphasis is mine unless otherwise indicated. Also, I have retained the original punctuation in all citations.
This range can be somewhat narrowed if we assume on one end that it took Moroni some time to get ore and plates and on the other end that Moroni had finished the book of Ether and had been hiding for some time before he felt to add again to the gold plates.

During the time that Moroni obtains ore and makes plates would he have carried the gold plates with him? Considering how Moroni reports even many years after the great battle at Cumorah that he remains alive only by hiding from the Lamanites, it seems that going out to acquire ore would have been a high risk activity, not one to be undertaken with the valuable gold plates in his possession. The risk would be too great that they would fall into the hands of the Lamanites. Thus it seems more reasonable to think that Moroni hid up the gold plates before he went out to obtain the ore from which he made the plates used in writing the book of Ether. After completing these plates, it seems reasonable that he would then go to where the plates were hidden and add these new plates to those already made by Mormon.

Near the end of the book of Ether, Moroni again bids farewell to the Gentiles, indicating that he once again believes he has completed the Book of Mormon. (Ether 12:38)

After adding the book of Ether to the gold plates, Moroni writes a preface to the Book of Mormon. . . . The preface also refers to the record being sealed and “hid up unto the Lord to come forth in due time.” This strongly suggests that after completion of the preface, the gold plates with the interpreters are secured in their final place of hiding.

It is important to remember that in abridging the history of the Jaredites, Moroni has the original twenty four plate history in his possession. . . .

Where did Moroni obtain the original records? It seems most reasonable to believe that he obtained them from the Nephite record depository made by Mormon in the hill Cumorah. This is the very same place from
which the Urim and Thummim might be obtained that Moroni is commanded to place with the record. When he completes the abridgment, Moroni is commanded to hide these original records up again. (Ether 4:1,3) That Moroni is told to hide them up again suggests they were already hidden. All of this implies that Moroni remains in the vicinity of the Nephite record depository in the hill Cumorah at least sixteen years after the great battle at Cumorah and possibly as long as thirty six years. (pp. 21–22, emphasis added with the exception of the last italicized word)

The third stage of this saga involves the actual writing of the Book of Moroni that was completed in A.D. 421. Moroni completes the record at least 36 years after the final battle.

Since he did not expect to write this record and since the preface to the Book of Mormon suggests that the record was given a final hiding after the completion of the book of Ether, it is quite likely that the gold plates had been in their place of final hiding for some time. Yet when Moroni finishes his record, he is close enough to the final hiding place to add his record to the plates already hidden. (p. 22)

All of this suggests, according to Hedengren, that Moroni lingered at the hill Cumorah at least 36 years after the final destruction of the Nephites. The content of the Book of Moroni is further evidence of this since it includes materials likely taken from the storehouse of records.

Apparently at the time Moroni begins writing the book of Moroni, he has ample plates for nothing that he includes is essential to the completion of the work and he only has the hope that “perhaps they [the things he writes] may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites.” (Moroni 1:4)

So what does he include? He includes the wording used in some priesthood ordinances, a sermon his father gave at the dedication of a new synagogue, and two epistles written to Moroni by his father. Then he
writes as the last chapter what is now truly his final farewell and the book ends.

The only historical facts included in the book of Moroni are the existence of fierce wars among the Lamanites and the killing of any Nephite that will not deny the Christ. (Moroni 1:4) Had any other events of historical significance occurred, Moroni would have had ample opportunity to record them.

In light of this, it appears highly improbable that Moroni undertook any purposeful extended travel at the command and direction of the Lord. Had he done so, he would have most certainly had opportunity and desire to write about this travel. Yet no travel is ever indicated in the text. Instead we read that about thirty-six years after the great battle at Cumorah, Moroni is simply hiding seeking to avoid death at the hands of the Lamanites. (Moroni 1:1) (p. 22)

I have presented the details of Hedengren’s argument as fully and as accurately as possible because these fine points lead him to significant conclusions that the reader would otherwise not be able to evaluate independently of my expressed opinions of them. From the foregoing analysis and interlaced speculations about what is “reasonable to believe,” Hedengren derives the following five “established facts”:

1. Moroni remains at least until the writing of the book of Moroni in the presence of the Lamanites.
2. Moroni remains close enough to the hidden gold plates that he is able to add the plates of Moroni.
3. Moroni likely put the gold plates in their final hiding place after writing the book of Ether.
4. To write the book of Ether, Moroni must have been near the Nephite record vault in the hill Cumorah.
5. Had Moroni undertaken extended purposeful travel, he would have mentioned it. There is no mention of such travel.

These facts indicate that at least until the completion of the book of Moroni in AD 421, Moroni remains
in the vicinity of the hill Cumorah and the vicinity of the buried gold plates.

Thus the hill Cumorah is at least in the vicinity of the place where the gold plates are buried. (pp. 22–23)

The foregoing argument, or sophistry, takes the reader by the nose and carefully leads him or her down to an invalid conclusion. I will address some of the specifics of this beguiling technique below, but only after asking an irreverent question: So what? Even if, for sake of argument, one concedes each supposed “established fact” on Hedengren’s list, does this necessarily lead him or her to Hedengren’s conclusion about the location of Cumorah/Ramah? No. If not, where is the flaw in the chain of reasoning?

Before addressing this question, it is of interest to note the final question that Hedengren addresses in his question-and-answer section at the end of his book.

17. Where might Moroni have wandered after hiding the plates for the last time?
He could have gone any place. If he averaged only eight miles per day, in a year he would travel 2920 miles.5

This is, of course, a self-serving, debate-ending question that could be better phrased to indicate the huge dilemma it raises for Hedengren’s preceding analysis: Where might Moroni have wandered after he finished the plates for the last time? This phrasing leaves open the legitimate question hidden by the original question: Did Moroni take the finished, abridged record with him in his final wanderings? I think the answer is clearly yes. Could he have reached New York from Central America had he only lived a year or so after completing his record? Hedengren’s analysis suggests that Moroni could have done so quite easily. In short, Hedengren’s detailed analysis of Moroni’s journeyings, in reality, brings one no closer to resolving the Cumorah controversy than before. For me, one of the more interesting questions is why Hedengren thinks that it does.

5 Ibid., unbound insert, 18 December 1995.
Leaving aside hypothetical debates and being more practical, I cannot concede each of the five points of Hedengren’s argument. His third and fifth points are not supported by the evidence or his logic. In short, I consider Hedengren’s argument to be fallacious. At least four logical problems, and one substantive one, undermine his desired conclusions. I will briefly consider each one in turn.

**Problem 1**

The first difficulty is that Hedengren confuses stated intentions for deeds. To present the problem at its most obvious, suppose that Moroni had written plainly in his last book that he intended to hide his record with all of the other records in Cumorah/Ramah (he did not actually say this). Would such a statement help us? What assurance could we have, once the line was inscribed and the record sealed, that Moroni’s intention was actually realized? Hedengren’s own useful analysis of Moroni’s saga suggests that Moroni did not know what was to become of him or his record. Why should a final entry alluding to his intentions be any different from the previous ones?

**Problem 2**

Another prevalent difficulty is the confusion between what the Book of Mormon records and what Hedengren thinks is reasonable to believe about individual statements. Statements and conjectures appear to be given equal weight in the final analysis. Information introduced as an “if” clause [“reasonable to believe”] transmutes to a “then” clause halfway through the argument without any recourse to additional data. Consequently, his conclusions are merely restated initial conjectures. Evaluative tools of “reasonableness” are particularly suspect. What makes any particular reading and interpretation “reasonable” and others not? From what perspective, or from whose perspective, is something reasonable? One does not have to be a social science wizard to realize that people’s opinions of plausibility vary widely according to circumstances, even within individual nuclear families.

The most egregious example of the logical lapses attributed to “reasonableness” criteria is also the most critical for Hedengren’s
argument. He suggests that “it appears highly improbable that Moroni undertook any purposeful extended travel at the command and direction of the Lord. Had he done so, he would have most certainly had opportunity and desire to write about this travel” (p. 22). This is a variant of Problem 1 just noted above concerning intention and behavior. Here, however, lack of information (i.e., failure to make a diary entry) is taken as a positive indication of lack of noteworthy behavior. This is mere wishful thinking. Of course, Hedengren may be guessing correctly on this matter, but no compelling logical reason to believe so exists.6

It is of interest to note that Hedengren also shifts the burden of proof in this last argument concerning Moroni’s travels, or lack thereof. In preceding arguments, Hedengren concerns himself with what is “reasonable to believe.” The rhetorical shift to the claim that something is “improbable” conveys an air of greater probability to the implied “probable” behavior alluded to by implicating its inverse. But this is merely the same old conjecture viewed from the other side of the fence, and it is no more probable than the other conjectures.

Problem 3

The third problem concerns semantic sloppiness and ambiguous, conflated, or sliding referents—the use of the same term to refer to two different things, with a concomitant failure to distinguish clearly between them. In Hedengren's argument for Cumorah, this is apparent in his obsessive concern with the hiding place of the plates. This focus makes little sense until it is realized that the hiding place is the key to establishing the identity of the hill Cumorah. Hedengren’s review of the evidence and the structure of his argument follow:

1. First, a conjecture: “After finishing the record of his father ... it is reasonable to expect Moroni to end the Book of Mormon. And it is also reasonable to think that Moroni would

---

6 In several places in the Book of Mormon, the prophet-scribes mention that they were forbidden to write what they had seen. Therefore, the presumption that Moroni could automatically write down everything important is a curious one and seems to presume a certain knowledge of what would be reasonable for the Lord to require.
have hidden the plates as quickly as possible” (p. 20, emphasis added).

2. Follow this with three more conjectures: “it seems more reasonable to think that Moroni hid up the gold plates before he went out to obtain the ore from which he made the plates used in writing the book of Ether. After completing these plates, it seems reasonable that he would then go to where the plates were hidden and add these new plates to those already made by Mormon” (p. 21, emphasis added). Note that the reasonable expectation of a hiding place (statement 1) has already become a fact at this point in the argument.

3. Next, a wild inference: “The preface also refers to the record being sealed and ‘hid up unto the Lord to come forth in due time.’ This strongly suggests that after completion of the preface, the gold plates with the interpreters are secured in their final place of hiding” (p. 21). This reading clearly goes beyond the mark. A future anticipated event is being taken (1) as an historic fact and (2) as the final fact of the hiding place of the record. Moroni’s statement reveals no clear indication as to when or where the record will be hidden. Clearly, it could not have been at the very instant that the verse was written.

4. Finally, some evidence: “When he completes the abridgment, Moroni is commanded to hide these original records up again. (Ether 4:1, 3) That Moroni is told to hide them up again suggests they were already hidden” (pp. 21–22).

5. Now for reification through repetition and a sliding referent: “Since he did not expect to write this record and since the preface to the Book of Mormon suggests that the record was given a final hiding after the completion of the book of Ether, it is quite likely that the gold plates had been in their place of final hiding for some time. Yet when Moroni finishes his record, he is close enough to the final hiding place to add his record to the plates already hidden” (p. 22, emphasis added). This argument is mere assertion and confuses a hiding place with the final hiding place.

Problem 4

The final logical lapse is the most severe. The preceding argument just outlined for Hedengren’s transmutation of a
conjecture (a needed hiding place) into a fact (the final hiding place) reveals that the overall argument for a New York Cumorah/Ramah is founded on a deft sleight-of-hand—I suspect even an accidental and unrecognized one. The whole purpose of Hedengren’s detailed analysis of Moroni’s final years is to demonstrate that Moroni stayed in the vicinity of the hill Cumorah/Ramah until the very last recorded moment. But as the argument for Moroni’s sedentism progresses, Hedengren works a conjurer’s trick and transforms the conjecture of Moroni’s (1) need to hide the plates into (2) the fact of hidden plates and eventually into (3) the conclusion that Moroni’s temporary hiding place was actually the final hiding place from which Joseph Smith obtained the plates. So by the time the reader is willing to concede the trivial point that Moroni stayed put, he or she has swallowed the more controversial claim that Moroni built his stone box in the same hill in which his father Mormon had stored all of the rest of the plates. No textual evidence or “reasonable” logic supports this claim. When the facts are put on the table, the claim appears absurd. This supposed fact is mere conjecture parading as legitimate inference.

Problem 5

The final issue concerns a matter of evidence. To this point I have given Hedengren’s data claims and primary inferences the benefit of the doubt. As is clear in the preceding argument, he makes much of the preface to the Book of Mormon and uses it to argue for an episode in which Moroni retrieved the plates, lamented his sorry state, and then hid the record, again, in its final hiding place. The legitimate questions that Hedengren raises are: when was the preface written, where was it written, and by whom was it written? Given the importance of this supposed intermediary

---

7 This scenario raises what I consider to be an interesting question: Why would Moroni bury the abridged plates in the same hill that housed the total record repository? Why hide them on the surface when they could be better hidden within the hill with all the other records? The obvious answer that occurs to me on this is ultimately unsatisfying as it meddles with divine intervention (i.e., separating the plates of Moroni from the rest of the plates for Joseph Smith’s benefit—perhaps to remove temptation).
episode in Moroni’s career, I am disappointed that Hedengren bypassed his opportunity to provide the reader with some legitimate scholarship here, touching on the questions he raises.

Joseph Smith informs us that the preface was “from the very last leaf” of the plates. This final placement brings immediately to mind the possibility that the title page was inscribed after the Book of Moroni and that the order of the leaves in the plates could relate to their writing sequence. I see no reason why this could not have been the case. But such a chronology would undermine Hedengren’s argument as presently constituted. As David Honey notes in his recent article on the title page of the Book of Mormon, opinions vary widely on when it was written and by whom. Some suggest that Mormon wrote the first part and that Moroni added to it later. In this scenario, it would have been Mormon who wrote “Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed.” Moroni repeated much of the same message: “Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile.”

Hedengren is right that a lot of sealing and hiding appears to have taken place. But acknowledging the complexity of the composition of the preface and its physical placement in the bound plates, it is difficult to accept Hedengren’s uninformed claims concerning the completion date of the preface and then from this unsubstantiated postulate derive any useful information relevant to the final disposition of the records. It further stretches the point to make this the key evidence for the location of Cumorah/Ramah.

In conclusion, I find Hedengren’s logic for a New York Cumorah/Ramah unconvincing and unfortunate. I think any claim to establish the hill’s location from details of the text must consider all the clues available. Hedengren does not do this. He does not locate the probable place of Cumorah by carefully construct-

---

10 I am not sufficiently familiar with the details of this debate to comment further. I merely raise the point to call attention to the issue as the various interpretations have significant implications for Hedengren’s argument.
ing a whole geography; rather, he constructs the geography from
presuming the location of the hill. And he has been a bit precipi-
tous in making this identification. As noted, his attempt is inge-
nious, but it ultimately collapses because of logical flaws.

Geography and Understanding

A question that ought to be asked of every Book of Mormon
geography is why it was written. Hedengren’s stated purpose is to
promote increased understanding of the lands and peoples men-
tioned in the book. The general metaphor alluded to is that of a
picture puzzle. Attempts to locate Book of Mormon lands in the
real world allow one to supply the missing pieces and fill in the
picture. Consider, for example, Hedengren’s key for evaluating
geographies:

In evaluating theories about the geography of the
Book of Mormon, three questions need to be carefully
considered.

First, is there any characteristic of the proposed
area that is clearly inconsistent with the text? . . .

Once an area is found to satisfy the textual re-
qu irements of the Book of Mormon, the second ques-
tion is: How well does an understanding of the area
further our understanding of events described in the
text? . . .

. . . If a site is proposed as a battlefield and it turns out
that the site has an impassable canyon to the south, our
knowledge of the existence of that canyon helps us un-
derstand why none fled south. In this case knowing the
actual site of the battle helps us fill in the picture given
in the text and helps us understand why what is de-
scribed occurred.

The final question to consider is: What cultural
similarities exist between the people described in the
text and the inhabitants of the proposed area, both an-
cient and at the time of initial European contact? (p. 2)

Greater understanding appears to be the laudable goal of all Book
of Mormon geographies, but what kind of understanding is
involved? What do we mean? Following the picture metaphor, "understanding" would appear to be a more complete and coherent picture of what may have occurred.

Hedengren's approach to picture-building and "understanding" results in several serious difficulties that I would like to put on record. If one were able to determine the actual location of Book of Mormon lands, Hedengren's method of filling-in-the-picture with details supplied by local geography and ethnography would be perfectly acceptable. But the whole point is that the location of Book of Mormon lands is unknown and that individual geographies are attempts to identify them. Therefore, we need methods (1) of identifying probable locations and (2) of evaluating the relative merits of each proposed geographic correlation. Hedengren's method of working dialectically between the text and a specific, real-world geography does not allow either, because both the text and the real-world geographic details become promiscuously compromised in the process. It is worth noting here that what I call the "dialectical method" is the most common approach used by geography hobbyists, and it has an abysmal record of failure because it promotes fallacious reasoning and compromise of textual and historical details.

However delicately one phrases it, the bottom line is that the dialectical method is an excuse for promoting one's conjectures as facts. It is a method for "making all the pieces fit." Mutual accommodation between text and physical feature is sought. For example, Hedengren argues that

In evaluating any region as a proposed site of Lehiite habitation, we should consider not only the consistency of the region to the text, but how well what is known about the region helps us understand the text.

(p. 59)

This sounds noble and scientific but is really a recipe for disaster. What would happen, for instance, if one evaluated the text against the wrong backdrop (something that surely must happen more often than not)? Naive science would suppose that the evidence would not "fit" and thus prod us to move on to better prospects. This rarely occurs, however, in the real world of investigators enthused with their own novel ideas. The reality blatantly evident in
scores of Book of Mormon geographies is that intractable facts are either made to "fit" or are summarily ignored. With this tendency in mind, it is highly significant, I think, that most limited Great Lakes geographies use less than half of the geographic details in the Book of Mormon whereas Central American geographies employ many more. Hedengren's own analysis only attempts to identify about thirty cities and natural features. Why so few?

Returning to the quest for understanding, what is really being sought? Are we interested in a clear, coherent picture or are we interested in the correct picture? How can we know when we have it right? In short, how can we distinguish between truth and entertainment? If by "understanding" we signal our commitment to the "truth" of a particular geography, then we claim more than is our right. If, however, by "understanding" we mean that we see things in a particular light—the truth or falsity of which remains in doubt—then our claim is legitimate but trivial.

To consider a specific example, the notion of "wilderness" has been interpreted in sundry ways. Nibley's early work treated "wilderness" as some extension of Old World notions of desert wastes.11 On the other hand, limited Central American geographies interpret "wilderness" as thickly wooded mountains or even jungle. Limited Great Lakes geographies, in turn, presumably would treat "wilderness" as tracts of hardwood forest (I have yet to see a limited Great Lakes geography that even addresses the question of wilderness).12 Each of the "wildernesses" of these different geographies differs radically from the others, and reading the Book of Mormon in light of any one of them would lead to correspondingly different insights and understanding—at

12 The references in the Book of Mormon to various wildernesses in the New World have commonly been interpreted by those constructing geographies as a physiographic distinction between land forms or vegetation communities: wilderness and nonwilderness [habitable] lands. This distinction does not easily fit into the environmental situation of upper New York and its seemingly homogeneous, broad expanses of hardwood forests. It could be argued that "wilderness" is a perceived difference between cultivated and occupied lands (i.e., those that have been cleared) and native stands of vegetation rather than one signaling a marked physiographic feature of zone.
least two (and maybe all) of which would be erroneous, but perhaps intellectually stimulating. Should one imagine desiccated travelers with parched lips dragging themselves across some baked wasteland? Or should one envision men, women, children, and flocks pushing a path through the unyielding vegetation of some torrid jungle? Should these differences in interpretation make a difference? These are rather simple questions derived from a simple example, but they make an obvious point: "understanding" comes from prior commitment to a particular geographic scheme. It is preprogrammed in our initial biases.

All models will yield "insights," but only the correct model can yield true understanding. Unfortunately, no rational way exists to distinguish between pseudoinsight and the real thing short of knowing with certainty that one has correctly identified the location of Book of Mormon lands. Consequently, short of receiving pure revelation on the matter, one cannot choose among the geographies based upon what one feels are the relative insights of each, or on the relative completeness of each picture, because each will yield the same number of insights and be approximately of the same caliber.

To return to the metaphor, the different frames in which one attempts to assemble the geography puzzle pieces change the possible ways in which the pieces fit together and the theme of the image assembled. One geography may reveal the metaphorical equivalent of a mountain scene, another that of a river, another that of a garden, and so on. How should one choose from among these equally lovely and complete scenes? Surely, assessments of relative loveliness cannot help. Grounding the metaphor in real behavior, I am arguing that autoevaluations of relative inspiration, vis-à-vis a particular geographic model, are a poor measure by which to judge relative truth value.

The obvious answer for how to choose the best geography from the rest is that we need to know beforehand what scene we should be seeking. If we know it should be a mountain scene, for example, the choice would be simplified. Put in this manner, my claim may appear to be the height of philosophical naiveté. But investigators can approach this situation by constructing complete Book of Mormon geographies, however fuzzy the image, based solely on the text and avoiding prior commitments to a particular
piece of real estate where they hope the lands may have been. Geography hobbyists must do their homework within the Book of Mormon before venturing forth to "prove" that Lehite lands were located in a particular place in the real world, such as the country of one's missionary experiences, place of birth, and so on. Every effort should be taken to avoid the temptation of playing the text off against a real-world setting in order to fill in the missing pieces. Surrendering to such a temptation robs one of the only viable tool for evaluating proposed geographies and choosing from among them.

Of course, the Book of Mormon also contains a wealth of detail concerning climate, flora and fauna, food crops, minerals, cultural beliefs and practices, architecture, tools, demographic trends, population movements, war, trade, and so forth. These details can be used for additional tests of any proposed geography. But as with details of the physical landscape, any proposed "tests" must be reconstructed independently of any real-world target. For example, I am personally convinced that the catastrophic events narrated in 3 Nephi conform to a clinical description of a volcanic eruption. Therefore, were I to take up the geography hobby, I would consider regions with evidence for recent volcanism and look, specifically, for a volcano that occurred in the first century A.D.\(^\text{13}\) The list of independent checks could be

---

\(^{13}\) I first heard this idea in a class from Dr. M. Wells Jakeman in 1974, and it was clear that he had plenty of historical examples to back up his claim. Perhaps this is absolutely the simplest test of a proposed Book of Mormon geography that one could devise: find a place in this hemisphere, near an ocean, with volcanoes that were active in the first century after Christ. It is significant that no limited New York geography will ever pass such a test. Of course, before the volcano criterion could constitute a valid test, a convincing case would have to be made for their presence based solely on the textual information in the Book of Mormon. John A. Tvedtnes has recently made this case in "Historical Parallels to the Destruction at the Time of the Crucifixion," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 170–86. I anticipate a number of responses to the above claim, all of which would raise a profound dilemma. In order to rescue any limited Great Lakes geography, advocates would have to find ways of arguing their way around the evidence for volcanoes. Undoubtedly this will be done. By so doing, these advocates will preserve the slim hopes for a limited geography centered around upstate New York. But what will they lose? For starters, to argue away the evidence for volcanoes would be to make a mockery of the descriptions in 3 Nephi. Of course, the Lord could make all these things happen anywhere and at
extended to several hundred. I would think that with all of these requirements, it would be a relatively simple matter to sort through the geography morass and identify the best one. For my money, Sorenson’s *Ancient American Setting*\(^\text{14}\) is still the best available on all counts (theoretical, methodological, inferential, and substantive).

**Concluding Remarks**

Evaluation of Book of Mormon geographies quickly becomes an onerous and tedious task, so why do it? As readers of this journal know, I engage in this diversionary activity from time to time whenever I encounter a novel argument that merits detailed treatment and one that I think should be of general interest. Contrary to the opinions of some, I do not evaluate geographies out of meanness, envy, or spite, but from a personal interest in the topic. Any book that claims to proclaim the truth about a topic as important as Book of Mormon lands ought to be subjected to the best criticism available. Unfortunately, those minds are generally otherwise occupied, and so I fill in when the opportunity presents itself.

The preceding criticisms and evaluation of Hedengren’s *The Land of Lehi* avoided the bulk of the text, so I do not pretend to have accorded it exhaustive treatment. The principal reason for this is that I do not think it deserves detailed consideration. I argued above that the primary claims of the book could not be logically sustained and that the whole method for proceeding was ill-advised. Hedengren skips the first and most critical step in constructing a geography, namely, the construction of an internal map that can be used to evaluate proposed correlations to the real world. Moreover, he advocates a promiscuous dialectic that has no

chance of helping him sort through the complex philosophical issues he raises.

In reading *The Land of Lehi*, one gets the sense that it was written in an intellectual vacuum. All other geographies are ignored, and this investigative ruse is justified by claiming that it is still too early to engage in comparative analysis. The failure to acknowledge previous studies is the primary weakness of most Book of Mormon geographies (perhaps forced ignorance is a necessary condition for writing something truly original). Until the various practitioners can overcome the colossal conceit implied in their self-imposed ignorance, all their attempts are doomed to fail.

As an interested reader of books on Book of Mormon geography, my primary question has to be: How does a particular geography stack up against the others? Hedengren does not say, nor does he provide any clues whereby a novice reader can formulate a legitimate opinion. My evaluation is that *The Land of Lehi* does not fare well. The book does have several redeeming qualities, as noted, but the tragedy of the book is that it could have been so much better had Hedengren attempted to incorporate the best of what others had done. To conclude: *caveat lector!*

Reviewed by Dennis H. Karpowitz

**The Word Is Powerful**

My desire to continue to read, reread, study, ponder, pray about, and live the teachings of the Book of Mormon has been strengthened by my reading of Robert L. Millet's *The Power of the Word: Saving Doctrines from the Book of Mormon*. Professor Millet writes, "To the degree that persons who read what follows are motivated to turn to the pure word, to the scriptural text itself, and be transformed by the power of that word—to that degree this work will have fulfilled its purpose" (preface, p. x). I found myself turning to the scriptures as I read the book. Millet quotes from the Book of Mormon on almost every page. The book is organized around major sermons or doctrinal treatises given by the Lord through the prophets of the Book of Mormon. However, Millet's work goes beyond the Book of Mormon itself. Quotes from the other standard works and from apostles and prophets of our day greatly enlarge the reader's understanding of the doctrines discussed in the Book of Mormon. Thus *The Power of the Word* includes a larger view of God's enunciation of saving principles and doctrines throughout all ages.

Since the Book of Mormon is another testament of Christ, any book dealing with the doctrines of the Book of Mormon should teach and enlighten the reader concerning Christ. *The Power of the Word* is filled with such enlightenment. Chapters 2, 13, 16, and 20 are particularly motivating. Millet writes, "It has wisely been observed that what a person thinks of Christ will largely determine what kind of a person he will be. How then could one utilize his time more profitably than by seriously studying the Book of Mormon, a book whose primary purpose is to reveal and testify of
Jesus Christ” (pp. 17–18). “Sometimes we tend to focus so much upon the fact that Jesus Christ died for us that we do not attend to an equally important facet of his redemptive enterprise—the fact he also came to live in us” (p. 177). “Ethical deeds, works of faith, acts of kindness toward others—these are so much more effective and pure when grounded in the love of Deity, when the source of goodness is the Holy One. As we begin to become new creatures in Christ, we begin to serve out of proper motives” (p. 234). “The Book of Mormon is not only an invitation to come unto Christ, but a pattern for the accomplishment of that consummate privilege” (p. 307). And finally, “I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. I know that the Lord God is its author. It speaks peace and joy to my soul. It is a quiet, steadying influence in my life. Many of our longings for another time and place, those vague but powerful feelings that we have wandered from a more exalted sphere, are satisfied and soothed when we read the Book of Mormon. Reading it is like coming home. It is a gift of God that we are expected to receive, understand, and experience” (p. 314). Without question, as a reader of this book and the scriptures it illuminates, I have felt a desire to come closer to Christ, understand his message more completely, and pattern my own life more fully after the pattern the Savior gave us.

At a recent area training meeting, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and Elder William R. Bradford, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and president of the North America Central Area, taught temple, mission, and stake presidents in attendance about the fundamental principles of the gospel. They wrote,

These principles are fundamental to all we do in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Programs and activities, including essential support functions, should give emphasis to these principles. The first fundamental principle is faith in and a testimony of: 1. God, the Eternal Father; 2. Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; 3. The Holy Ghost, the Testifier and Comforter. Fundamental to the restored gospel are: 1. The atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ; 2. The apostasy and restoration of the gospel and the Church
of Jesus Christ; 3. The divinely ordained role of the Prophet Joseph Smith in bringing to pass the purposes of God for His children; 4. The crucial and pivotal doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ as contained in the holy scriptures and the teachings of the prophets, including: a. The plan of salvation, b. Ordinances and covenants, and c. Continuing revelation.¹


The twenty chapters are not of equal length. They range from 5 to 27 pages, with an average of 15.8 pages. Each chapter is clearly organized with headings and subheadings. Italic and bold fonts help emphasize that which the author feels is particularly important. Each quotation is properly referenced, and notes at the end of each chapter allow the reader to seek additional information about more subtle issues. Because the book is organized around great doctrinal sermons in the Book of Mormon, the chapter headings suggest one major theme of the sermon or passage, but many other doctrinal elements receive attention as well.

¹ Handout from area training meeting, North America Central Area, 28–29 October 1995.
This organization helps the reader understand more fully the message or messages of the sermon. It also leads to some repetition of material and some scattering of material across several chapters. For example, the title of chapter 5 leads one to expect a discussion of the fall of Adam, but it is only in chapter 6 that the personal meaning of the fall for each of us is amplified.

As with any book of this nature, some questions arise in the mind of the serious reader. For example, would it be appropriate to emphasize the speculative nature of the discussion in chapter 3 as to how much of the record on the brass plates may have been written in Egyptian or reformed Egyptian? Also in chapter 3, it might be more correct to suggest that the contributions of the Book of Mormon do not represent new doctrine but rather refined explanations and examples of doctrine found in many of the scriptures and taught by God to his prophets in all dispensations (see p. 28). Chapter 4 clearly illuminates how the anti-Christ of the Book of Mormon worked. Would this chapter have been strengthened by giving examples of similar approaches and characteristics in our day? Much in popular music, politics, and business adheres to such tactics used by anti-Christ. Would it be helpful to note in chapter 5 that some General Authorities have emphasized Adam and Eve’s partaking of the fruit as sin while others have distinguished between sin and transgression? In the discussion of the natural man in chapter 6, is it possible that the spirit of humankind has a propensity for both good and evil? It is a difficult task to find a balance in the emphasis of the importance of both grace and works. Is it possible that chapter 6 too heavily emphasizes grace? Please don’t read this as suggesting that grace is not important. Without grace no one except Christ would be saved. But it is also essential that each of us do all that is within our power to live fully the principles of the gospel. Even if all we do is pitifully small compared to what the Savior does for us, it is still absolutely vital to our salvation. “It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). I wonder if chapter 11 on repentance might profitably be read before chapter 8 on the new birth.

I might choose to entitle chapter 9 as “Abinadi’s Sermons on the Law of Moses, the Atonement, and the Fatherhood and Sonship of Christ.” If any omission exists in The Power of the Word,
it is the lack of a discussion of the “fifth gospel,” particularly the Sermon on the Mount. It is my opinion that God often repeats that which is of particular importance. I don’t believe it is an accident that we have five gospels. The rendition in the Book of Mormon adds much to our understanding of these beautiful sermons and doctrine. I was somewhat concerned that in chapter 14 the reader might come away with the idea that the principles contained in the Sermon on the Mount are in some way linked to situational ethics. Surely these teachings are Christ centered in every way. The fact that others fail to realize the depth of those teachings and all that Christ is, does nothing to lessen their importance.

I disagree with Millet’s statement in chapter 16, in his discussion of obstacles to charity, that “The Savior’s commission to ‘love thy neighbor as thyself’ has little to do with loving oneself” (p. 239). Each week our young women all over the world recite their Young Women’s Values and remember their “divine nature.” If we do not respect our divine nature, I believe it becomes difficult to love others in the way Christ intended. This is not a proud or haughty overemphasis on self, but rather a realization of what is good and worthwhile in each of us, all of which is magnified many times if we fully love and serve God and our fellowman.

Further in chapter 16, Millet discusses charity as a fruit of the spirit. Is the suggestion here that will, choice, or attitude plays no role in the development of charity (see p. 241)? I hope not. Clearly the quotation from Bruce C. Hafen on page 242 seems to imply will or choice. David O McKay wrote, “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.”2 In this phrase both God and man seem to do something. I would like to make a subtle nuance of emphasis on the constant interaction between our efforts, will, heart, soul, and action and the Spirit of God, which moves us beyond our own capacities and comes as a gift of love and grace. The last two paragraphs of this chapter deal with small concerns and subtle points of emphasis that should not detract from the great positive contribution of Millet in *The Power of the Word.*

I found many moments of enlightenment and inspiration as I read *The Power of the Word.* A few items from Millet’s writing

---

2 Conference Report, October 1959, 89–90.
were particularly meaningful to me: Chapter 1 is filled with the beautiful spirit of testimony. In chapter 4, "Portrait of an Anti-Christ," Millet makes it very clear that Sherem prophesies while denying prophecy: "I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be" (Jacob 7:9; see p. 50). I like the connection of the spirit of adultery with the spirit of blindness (p. 52). In chapter 7 Millet does a wonderful job of clarifying how Christ's atonement is infinite (see especially p. 89).

I also appreciate the questions he raises and then answers with scriptures or quotations from modern prophets. For example, in chapter 7 he quotes a question asked of Joseph Smith and the answer Joseph gave: "What are the fundamental principles of your religion?" Joseph was asked. "The fundamental principles of our religion," he replied, "are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (p. 90). Chapter 9 offers a wonderful emphasis on the importance of baptism by fire, the reception of the Holy Ghost (see especially p. 104). Chapter 9 reiterates four specific ways in which Jesus Christ is both the Father and the Son. "First of all, Jesus Christ is known as Father by virtue of his role as the Creator" (p. 122). Secondly, Christ is Father through spiritual rebirth" (p. 122). Third, Christ is "known as Father by divine investiture of authority" (p. 123). Fourth, Christ is both the Father and the Son because "he was conceived by the power of God and inherited all of the divine endowments, particularly immortality, from his exalted Sire. He will be called the Son because of the flesh—his mortal inheritance from his mother, Mary" (p. 124).

Chapter 10, "The Holy Order of God," makes clear the meaning of the Church of the Firstborn (p. 141). Before reading the discussion on page 162, I had never equated hell with outer darkness. I really enjoyed reading about the concept of the "articles of adoption" (p. 175). I appreciated Millet's discussion of the millennium in chapter 15, "The House of Israel: From Everlasting to Everlasting" (see especially p. 225). His descriptions of several tender experiences of love of God and love for God through vision and the Holy Ghost are beautiful and uplifting (see p. 232 as an example).
The Power of the Word does much to help us understand, in the words of President Ezra Taft Benson, that

Not only will the word of God lead us to the fruit which is desirable above all others, but in the word of God and through it we can find the power to resist temptation, the power to thwart the work of Satan and his emissaries. The word of God, as found in the scriptures, in the words of living prophets, and in personal revelation has the power to fortify the Saints and arm them with the Spirit so they can resist evil, hold fast to the good, and find joy in this life. (cited in the preface, p. ix)

I recommend this book to anyone who seriously desires to understand more fully the saving doctrines from the Book of Mormon, from other scriptures, and from the teachings of modern apostles and prophets.

Reviewed by Phillip R. Kunz

The title of this book was very intriguing to me. As a young missionary in the 1950s, before the standardized missionary plan was prepared, we had a discussion on the Book of Mormon, in which we told the people about the book and invited them to put Moroni's promise to the test. We did not teach from the Book of Mormon, nor did we really refer to it after that. We did not know how.

Since President Benson's emphasis on the Book of Mormon there has been more attention given to the converting power of this scripture. Pearson has written a very engaging narrative that makes his book interesting to read and ponder. Throughout the book he has used quotations from himself and others with whom he interacted. While the exact wording of these conversations is probably not totally accurate, although he relied on his journals and diaries, the nature of the conversations is probably accurate, and using the conversations does lend itself to showing the reader how to make use of the Book of Mormon as a tool for conversion.

While I recently presided as a mission president over more than six hundred missionaries, I found that a testimony of the Book of Mormon does indeed lead one to a testimony of Jesus Christ, of Joseph Smith, of the Church which he helped to restore upon the earth, and of a modern-day prophet. I believe that this book would have helped some of my missionaries learn how to use the Book of Mormon more effectively. For this reason I would recommend *Moroni's Promise*.

I found the use of one secondary source a bit disconcerting. On page 72 the account of Joseph and Sidney receiving section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants is cited. The author quotes the *Juvenile Instructor* for the account "as quoted in Lyndon W.
Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith.*" With the *Juvenile Instructor* so easily available in libraries, the author would have done well to cite the original source. If the author had checked the original source, he would have noticed that Cook, in his version, omitted the portion from the original quotation indicated by the italicized words below:

Joseph would, at intervals, say: "What do I see?" as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what had been seen or what he was looking at.

I liked the book, except for pages 97 through 110, in which the author discusses organic evolution. Here the book appears merely to add to comments left over from some previous encounters with this topic. Perhaps further development of the topic in terms of how it fits with Moroni's promise would have assisted me. I would have preferred that such statements as "The Book of Mormon teaches that Adam and Eve were our first parents" or "The Book of Mormon teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ created the earth" had been used to demonstrate that Christ did create the earth and that Adam and Eve were real persons and were the first parents.

I am not convinced that the Book of Mormon says or wants to say much more than this about evolution. I did not find this section to be of the same spirit as the rest of the book. The creation of the Grand Canyon and the reality of dinosaur fossils are on a back burner for me. I am not sure how they came about, but I know that Christ is the Redeemer. The evolution question does not concern me as much as the sacred nature of the Book of Mormon and how it can help bring about conversion. The early part of the book I found to be very stimulating and, in spite of the treatment of evolution, I would still recommend the book.

Reviewed by John A. Tvedtnes

**What’s in a Name?**

**A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon**

Since the appearance of the Book of Mormon in 1830, critics and believers alike have sought to explain the origin and meaning of the more than 200 nonbiblical names in the Nephite record. Critics have typically assumed that Joseph Smith modified either the names of people and places known to him from his northeastern United States environment or names he found in the Bible. Believers have shown that many of the names have good Hebrew and Egyptian etymologies and thus constitute evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

The Salonimers, who appear to be adherents of the RLDS faith, fall into the latter category, though they provide only Hebrew etymologies, never Egyptian. On the title page, they describe the book’s contents in these words: “By reversing traditional Hebrew to English transliteration phonetics, the authors find a predominance of Hebrew roots for the names of persons, places and things given by the family of Lehi and their descendants” (capitalization changed). They claim that “of the Lehi-ite names in the Book of Mormon . . . more than 80% . . . can now be so identified that they accord with Hebrew onomastics” (p. 15).

---

1 The Book of Mormon references used in the book are those found in the RLDS edition, though an “addendum,” in the form of a printed insert, lists all RLDS references and gives the equivalents found in the LDS edition.
Despite what appears to be a large investment in time, the book is so full of errors that I cannot recommend it to the serious Book of Mormon student. The authors’ knowledge of Hebrew is simply not up to the task they undertake. Indeed, the situation is summed up by the mistake made in their quotation from Mormon 9:33: “if we could have written in the Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection [sic] in our record” (p. 13).

The first clue that the Salonimers’ grasp of Hebrew is inadequate lies in the subtitle to the book, in which they use the term *Lehi-ite*. Since the gentilic deriving from Nephi is Nephite, one would expect that the gentilic of Lehi would be Lehite. Throughout their etymologies, the Salonimers provide evidence for their minimal exposure to Hebrew grammar. For example, they give the meaning of “Blessed of Yah” to *Jeberechiah*, despite the fact that the name is a verbal form and means “Yah (Jehovah, the Lord) blesses” or “Yah will bless.” In rendering *Immanuel* as “God with us,” they are obviously relying on the King James rendition of Matthew 1:23 (where the name is spelled Emmanuel), taken from the Greek. The name actually means “God is with us” and is a sentence.² Had the Salonimers known Hebrew better, they would have rendered it thus.

In preparing their book, the Salonimers have made a number of incorrect assumptions. For example, they write that “the mode of transliteration from the Biblical Hebrew spelling in the Hebrew Old Testament to the English spelling in the King James Old Testament is consistent” (p. xi). But since the King James Bible was translated by a committee of nearly fifty people, there is a certain measure of inconsistency in the transliteration of names. Thus, for example, the Hebrew name usually rendered Joshua is spelled Jehoshua in Numbers 13:16 and 1 Chronicles 7:27, while the name usually rendered Samuel appears as Shemuel in Numbers 34:20 and 1 Chronicles 6:33; 7:2. Similarly, the name that appears as Isaiah fifteen times in the book of that name and in several other Old Testament passages (twelve times in 2 Kings 19–20 and in 2 Chronicles 26:22; 32:20, 32) is transliterated differently in other parts of the King James Bible. Thus, it appears as Jesaiah in

² The Hebrew equational sentence does not use the copula (“to be” verb), the meaning being expressed by syntax alone.
1 Chronicles 3:21 and Nehemiah 11:7 and as Jeshaiah in 1 Chronicles 25:3, 15; 26:25, and Ezra 8:7, 19. Ironically, though they state their intention to adhere to KJV spelling conventions, the Salonimers depart therefrom. For example, they use the spelling Beershebah (p. 18), which never appears in the KJV.

The authors spend a good deal of time trying to explain Hebrew phonology to the reader. Some of their statements are simply incorrect, while others provide more detail than the English reader needs in order to understand Book of Mormon names. Thus, for example, they make a point of the difference between the Hebrew letter bet with and without the dot (dagesh) in the middle, noting that the former is pronounced “B as in Boy,” the latter “V as in Vine.” They then transliterate the biblical name Abraham as “Ahv-raw-hawm” (p. 26). I believe that this can only confuse the reader, since the Book of Mormon spelling of the name is, in fact, the same as that of the King James Bible. Besides, the difference between the two written forms of bet, invented by the Masoretic scribes, is only perceived by later nonspeakers of Hebrew. To the ancient Israelite, these were mere allophones of the same phoneme and were therefore not distinguishable. Thus, when it appeared after a vowel, the native speaker of Lehi’s day would automatically have aspirated the sound b (it later became a fricative, v). We have a similar situation in English, where native speakers perceive no difference between the k sound of caw and key, despite the fact that the former is pronounced by placing the tongue farther back than the latter (to correspond with the placement of the tongue when pronouncing the following vowel).

I find several problems with the Salonimers’ identification of Book of Mormon names with Hebrew etymologies. Here are just a few of the many examples that could be cited.

1. They fail to note that some Book of Mormon names have biblical equivalents.

The following names are found in the Bible, a fact that the Salonimers’ listing ignores: Akish, Antipas, Kish, and Timothy. It may well be that these Book of Mormon names do not have the same etymology as the biblical names, but one should note that they are found, with the same spelling, in both volumes of scripture.
2. The derived meanings are sometimes nonsensical or illogical.

Some of the meanings given by the Salominers just don’t make sense, such as “where did he climb?” for Antipas, “not climbing” for Antipus, and “he squashed” for Pachus. And only Charlie Chan would name a son “five,” which is the meaning they assign to Chemish (though, in fairness, one must note that Chemish was the fifth generation after Lehi). Johnny Five from the Short Circuit movies would be pleased. There are several much better etymologies for Chemish, one of which is “courageous,” based on the Arabic cognate that Ibn Barun read into Exodus 13:18, making the Israelites go up out of Egypt “courageously” (rather than “harnessed” as in KJV or “in a rank of five” as others would have it).³

In an extreme case, the Salominers assign the Hebrew meaning “teaching/singing shining/mountain” to the name Aaron (p. 97), despite the fact that Bible scholars typically see an Egyptian origin for this name.

Drawing the name Gid from the word meaning “sinew, or tendon,” they assign meanings of “sinew of Giddonah” to Gidgiddonah and “sinew of my Gideon” to Gidgiddoni, neither of which makes a lot of a sense. They have obviously never encountered reduplication or gemination in the Semitic languages.

Another etymology that makes little sense is the one given for Jacobugath, “Jacob with winepress.” While it is true that the conjunction (normally rendered “and,” but translated by the Salominers as “with” in this example) can have the form ē, it would do so only under specific phonological conditions that are not met in this name.⁴ If we are really dealing with the Hebrew element for “winepress” (gāt), the ē is more likely the old nominative case ending and the name would mean “Jacob of the winepress.” We might also consider Robert F. Smith’s suggestion⁵ that this name is a combination of the Nephite name Jacob

---


⁴ The conjunction takes this form when prefixed to a word beginning with a labial consonant (b, m, w, p) or where the first vowel of the word is shawā (ā).

⁵ In a private communication more than two decades ago.
and the Jaredite name Ogath (Ether 15:10). Jacobugath was the city where the people of the rebellious King Jacob settled (3 Nephi 9:9); they may have taken over the earlier Jaredite site and added Jacob’s name to it.

Stranger still is the fact that the Salonimers take names that have already been translated into English and give a Hebrew equivalent, then translate the Hebrew. Thus Bountiful comes out meaning “land of plenty, etc.,” while Desolation is rendered “land of devastation, etc.” They also transliterate God (and even Lord) into its Hebrew equivalent (“ch-loh-heem”), with the notation, “meaning unknown.”

3. The transliteration of the Hebrew words often does not match the Book of Mormon spelling and is often internally inconsistent.

Two Book of Mormon names begin with the Hebrew element abi-, but the Salonimers treat them differently (p. 96). They render Abinadom as “father of he who is silent,” while they see Abinadi as deriving from the root for “stone,” which is ‘eben, from an original ‘abn. They transliterate the name as “ah-ven-ay-dee” (‘aben-‘edi), “stone of my witness” and thus eliminate the i in the element abi. A much more reasonable etymology would be Hebrew ‘abi-nodî, “father of my wandering,” though there are other possibilities that include “father” as the first element.

Despite the letter h in the name Pahoran (which has a good Egyptian etymology that the authors ignore), the Salonimers assign it to a Hebrew form that should have been transliterated pe’oren, but which they render peh’oh’ren, giving the impression that the Hebrew has an h in it—which it does not. Readers who do not know Hebrew are consequently misled into believing that a valid etymology is being presented.

4. They ignore Hebrew etymologies that more closely match the Book of Mormon spelling and make better sense or that entail a simpler explanation.

The Salonimmers give the meaning “a mighty warrior” to the name Gideon. While it is true that both the biblical and the Book of Mormon men of that name were, in fact, mighty warriors, that is not the meaning of the Hebrew name, which derives from the root gd’, “hew,” perhaps because the original Gideon hewed down the grove of trees dedicated to Baal (Judges 6:25–26).
While the name Jarom seems to be a verbal form of the root meaning “to raise, exalt,” it is not a reflexive and cannot mean, as the Salonimers have it, “he will lift himself.” Rather, it is probably hypocoristic, from an original Jeremiah, “the Lord will raise/exalt,”\(^6\) with the divine name dropped, as is frequent in Hebrew names. The vowel change can be explained in the same way as the change from the original Berechiah, “the Lord blesses,” to Baruch, the name of the scribe to the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah.\(^7\)

In some cases, the Salonimers have not followed Occam’s razor—giving the simplest possible explanation—but have gone out of their way to complicate things. Thus, for example, they assign the meaning “there are riches” to the place-name Jashon, requiring that it be made up of two Hebrew words. A simpler explanation would see the name as a derivative of one of the two Hebrew roots יָשָׂה, one meaning “sleep,” the other “old” or “ancient.” Similarly, they assign a meaning of “a peak of song” (two Hebrew words that don’t have this meaning) to Siron, which can be more readily explained by several other possibilities, one of which is “place of the thorn” or, more likely (based on Isaiah 34:13), “place of the forest.”

5. They seem to be unaware of previous research in the area of both biblical and Book of Mormon names.

This is most evident in the much-discussed name Jershon, the land given by the Nephites to the people of Ammon. The Salonimers, preferring to see the initial \(j\) as \(g\), rather than the normal Hebrew \(y\) transliterated \(j\) in KJV, have rendered it “gayr-

---

6. The Salonimers incorrectly give the meaning “Yah will rise” to the name Jeremiah. The root means “be high,” not “rise,” and the verbal form here is “make high” or “exalt.”

7. The vocalic variation between Berechiah and Baruch, generally accepted by scholars, can be compared with the variation between Book of Mormon Mulek and biblical Malchiah, proposed by Robert F. Smith, “New Information about Mulek, Son of the King,” in Reexploring the Book of Mormon, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 142–44. David Rolph Seely’s criticism of Smith’s suggestion on phonological grounds is, in light of the form Baruch, unwarranted; see his review in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 5 (1993): 311–15. For the latest treatment of the name Baruch/Berechiah, see Herschel Shanks, “Fingerprint of Jeremiah’s Scribe,” Biblical Archaeology Review 22/2 (March/April 1996): 36–38.
shone” and assigned the meaning “a stranger, a refugee.” But the Hebrew Yërṣôn would mean “place of inheritance,” which makes perfectly good sense, since the Nephites declared, “this land Jershon is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance” (Alma 27:22; cf. 35:14).

Though several Latter-day Saint writers have proposed etymologies for the name Cumorah (mine being kamôrâh, “priesthood”), the Salonimmers give it the strange meaning of “storing underground,” evidently from the Hebrew root meaning “darkness, gloominess.” They don’t even try to give an etymology for sheum, which appears in a list of grains in Mosiah 9:9, despite the fact that it is the Akkadian word for barley and sometimes other cereal grains and has been discussed by a number of Book of Mormon scholars.

The Salonimmers assign Hebrew etymologies to names like Paanchi, which is clearly better explained in terms of Egyptian, as Hugh Nibley demonstrated many years ago. They are also aware that Nibley long ago showed that the name Alma appears in one of the Bar Kochba documents of nearly two millennia ago, but not in the form given by the Salonimmers.

I have discussed elsewhere the use of the gentilic or nisbeh in names such as Lamonì (“Lamanite”), Muloki (“Mulekite”), and Moroni (“Moronite,” from the land of Moron), but the

---

8 The Hebrew suffix -ôn denotes places, as in the biblical site names Hebron (“place of the friend,” from Abraham, the friend of God, who lived there), Gibeon (“place of the hill”), Ayyalon (“place of the deer”), etc.


11 John A. Tvedtnes, “Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?” I Have a
Salonimers are unaware of this work. Consequently, they assign meanings of “to (for) me” to Lamoni, “my Mulok (or my Mulek)” to Muloki, and “my master” to Moroni. In the latter case, their etymology is based not on Hebrew, but on Aramaic, as it is in some of the other names discussed in their book. Consequently, to the Salonimers, Moron means “master,” which is a strange name to give to a Jaredite land (where, I assume, Moroni was born).

What is most surprising, however, is that the Salonimers assign etymologies to biblical names that are not in line with the work done by Bible scholars over the years. Thus, instead of assigning the meaning “exalted” to Miriam, the Hebrew equivalent of Mary, they give it the meaning “sea of bitterness.” They further declare that Nazareth is “of uncertain” derivation, despite the fact that scholars see the name as the feminine equivalent of the Hebrew word for “branch.”

This is not to say that all of the Salonimers’ etymologies are wrong, though I find myself disagreeing with most of them. In one instance, we find ourselves in virtual agreement while disagreeing with other writers. Like the Salonimers, I have noted elsewhere that Zarahemla probably derives from the Hebrew zera’hemlāh. I rendered it “seed of compassion,” while they give a meaning of “child of grace, pity, or compassion.” The first word literally means “seed,” not “child,” though it is often used in the sense of offspring.

The Salonimers’ etymology for ziff, “pitch, tar, asphalt,” could correspond to the biblical place-name Ziph, which is what the Hebrew word they list indicates. They assign it a meaning of “pitch, tar, asphalt,” though this word appears in the Bible in the form zephet (Exodus 2:3; Isaiah 34:9). Since ziff appears in the Book of Mormon in a list of other metals (silver, iron, brass, and copper; see Mosiah 11:3, 8), it is more likely to be a metal than tar. Some have likened ziff with the Hebrew ziw, “splendor, brightness,” which better fits the name of a metal, perhaps an alloy or a naturally occurring metal such as electrum (a mixture of gold and silver).

I find the etymological study of Book of Mormon names to be a fascinating endeavor, but one that cannot be undertaken without considering a number of important factors ignored by the Salonimers. We must contend, for example, with the fact that, while the Book of Mormon clearly follows the KJV pattern for biblical names, we cannot be certain if there was a consistent transliteration of names into our own alphabet. After all, Joseph Smith dictated the text to scribes. What of the names that appear to have an Egyptian etymology? Should we expect Hebrew etymologies of Jaredite names, in view of the fact that they were not Israelites?

These and many more issues make it clear that this is a work not to be undertaken by those whose background in Near Eastern languages is insufficient to the task. Consequently, I laud the Salonimers for their valiant attempt, but admonish them to do their homework first.

---

12 Some of the difficulties are discussed in Paul Y. Hoskisson’s “An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon,” in By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:126–35. For evidence that the transliterations were at least somewhat regular, see my “A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite & Jaredite Proper Names,” Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA No. 141, December 1977, now available as a FARMS reprint.


Reviewed by John W. Welch

The thesis of this interesting article is that in ancient religions "the living were thought to be obligated to help the deceased become integrated into the realm of the dead" (p. 663), and hence the early Christians in Corinth "had themselves baptized ... to help the deceased pass through the transition" into the next life (p. 675). Latter-day Saints will find some useful information in this article, and it is good to find scholarly attention given to the important subject of baptism for the dead; but DeMaris overemphasizes the influence of Greco-Roman ideas on this early Christian ordinance and is not persuasive in casting Paul as a veiled critic of this practice.

DeMaris begins his article with a helpful summary of previous scholarly attempts to explain the crucial but puzzling passage in 1 Corinthians 15:29. Rejecting "dozens of proposed solutions" that offer imaginative readings of this text, DeMaris finds that the most viable interpretation of the Greek is the obvious one, that the Corinthian Christians performed "a vicarious baptism undergone by the living for the benefit of the physically dead" (p. 662).

DeMaris presents considerable evidence for the existence of Greco-Roman temples or cultic facilities in the area around Corinth, including a rare sacred site dedicated to Hades, the god of the underworld, that were especially concerned with making offerings for the dead (p. 667). Accordingly, DeMaris believes that the "first-century Corinthians were preoccupied with the world of the dead" (p. 671), and because of this they were drawn to the practice of baptizing themselves for their dead as a funerary ritual. He argues further that the "primary obligation to the dead in Greco-Roman society typically fell to family members, so it is likely that those who had themselves baptized were kin of the dead"
Thus, it would appear that this Christian ordinance was grounded in concerns for the eternal welfare of one's kindred dead. So in certain respects, DeMaris comes close to the Latter-day Saint understanding of baptism for the dead.

DeMaris, however, places too much emphasis on Greco-Roman evidence. What he says about ancient Greek and Roman societies devoting considerable family resources to help the deceased become integrated into the realm of the dead can also be said about most ancient cultures, including Egyptian, Etruscan, and to some extent Jewish societies. Thus, DeMaris goes too far in seeing baptism for the dead as a direct and exclusive response of a few early Christians to the local Greco-Roman religious environment that may have been prominent in and around Corinth.

He is also too limiting in his conclusion that “only the Corinthian Christians” ever performed baptisms for the dead (p. 671). Indeed, DeMaris himself mentions but gives little weight to the concern of the Thessalonian Christians about the place of deceased church members in the coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18), and he acknowledges Hermas’s interpretation of a vision “in which deceased apostles and teachers preached and baptized among those who had died before the advent of Christ (Herm. Sim. 9.16.5–6)” (p. 672). Further evidence marshaled by Hugh Nibley also suggests that the practice may have been more widespread than the single reference in 1 Corinthians 15:29 explicitly demonstrates.¹

DeMaris concludes his article with a discussion of the implications of baptism for the dead in connection with Pauline theology. Seeking, but unable to find, any evidence that Paul voiced “any dissatisfaction with vicarious baptism” (pp. 679–81), DeMaris still oddly suggests that Paul wrote Romans 6:1–11 with this ordinance in mind and as an implied criticism of the Corinthians’ theology of vicarious baptism. By seeing baptism as a journey from life to death, he argues, Paul allegedly rejected the idea that baptism for the dead was a transition in the other direction from death to life. While DeMaris may be right when he asks, “What likelier source is there for the burial imagery in Romans 6 than vicarious

baptism, a funerary ritual” (p. 682), he overlooks the logical force of verse 5, which reads: “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Romans 6:5). The logic of this verse moves from death to life: because one has been planted in the likeness of Christ’s death, one shall rise in the likeness of his resurrection. But then, if resurrection is to have universal effect, as Paul clearly believed (1 Corinthians 15:22), Romans 6:5 would seem to imply that all who will be resurrected in the likeness of Christ must be baptized—even those who have died. Thus, instead of reflecting some latent discomfort on the part of Paul with the practice of baptism for the dead, Romans 6:5 more likely reflects an expectation that all people will somehow be afforded the blessings of baptism. To provide for those who have not received baptism directly, a theology of vicarious performance offers a natural and obvious substitute.

DeMaris’s article is one piece of a substantial body of scholarship on 1 Corinthians 15:29. He and other scholars over the years have brought valuable tools to bear on this text, and some of their conclusions are consistent with the Latter-day Saint understanding of baptism for the dead. But in the end, the full meaning of this passage becomes clearer and more coherent through revealed knowledge. For example, prophetic vision sees baptism for the dead as a necessary link between ancestors and posterity, for “we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect” (D&C 128:18). Thus, it is not merely a matter of the living helping the dead, as DeMaris’s model proposes. “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead,” Paul rhetorically asks. In other words, if the dead were not to rise, Paul foresees some problem befalling those who perform the baptisms. I would suggest that only by reading this statement in light of the teachings of Joseph Smith does it become clear why those who perform these ordinances need their kindred dead as much as the dead have need of them.

DeMaris may be on the right track in certain respects, but there is more at work in Corinth than nocturnal chthonic rites or syncretistic commemorations of the dead.
Telling the Story of the Joseph Smith Papyri

The story of the Joseph Smith papyri has been told many times but rarely well. Nevertheless, two of the three studies under review here are important steps forward and will be considered in turn. Someday, perhaps, someone will write an accurate account of the papyri that is as interesting as the story. The present review is perhaps too critical of writers who will likely never write on this

---

subject again, but it is so because their works will doubtlessly be extensively quoted.

**How Not to Get Your Message Across**

James Harris’s self-published volume contributes some very interesting items to the discussion on the book of Abraham. Unfortunately, it is doubtful that anyone will ever find them or use them because of the volume’s major flaws. Most of these flaws—which plague nearly every page of the book—could have been corrected had the author had the benefit of three things: (1) a good editor, who would have insisted on complete bibliographic references and a consistent style and tone; (2) higher quality production values, that might have made sure that the pictures were in focus and that consistent type faces were used throughout; and (3) an understanding of the Egyptian language, since, regretfully, every one of the author’s own transcriptions, transliterations, and translations of Egyptian—and not a few of those that he attributes to others—is incorrect. For the want of these things, the author’s every positive contribution to the study of the book of Abraham is buried under such a mountain of errors that it is difficult to see how anyone is supposed to extract from his book what is useful: Egyptologists would probably have difficulty seeing past the manifold mistakes, while Latter-day Saints will probably have difficulty recognizing those mistakes. Latter-day Saints might also feel uncomfortable with the author’s claim to be “a special witness” (Harris, p. 88), since that term is normally used only of the Apostles and the Seventy (D&C 27:12; 107:23–26).

To assist those interested in making use of the book, I will provide a partial list of what is usable: (1) The bibliography is often useful, though this is scattered throughout the book (often cited in the text or pictures) and is often dreadfully fragmentary. (2) The collection of hypocephali is possibly the largest collection in print, but it is rendered generally useless through Harris’s cut-and-paste approach that results in something resembling a display of dissected frogs with all the stomachs carefully shown in one place, all the hearts in another, and all the intestines in a third. This might be useful if the question was one of identification of the various parts, but it fails when one wants to know how the whole
thing fits together. Unfortunately not all parts of all hypocephali are shown; some useful information seems to have been left on the cutting-room floor. (3) The subject matter of the pictures is generally good, though some pictures are not identified, many are out of focus, and some are completely irrelevant. (4) Some of the given historical information is not usually considered in this context, some of the given information is not completely reliable, and a complete discussion of any historical aspect of the papyri, the so-called Kirtland Egyptian papers, or the book of Abraham is absent. Those interested in accurate historical information or Egyptological discussions will have to turn elsewhere, such as the other two studies under review.

The Latest Egyptological Treatment of the Subject

The latest entry in a series published by the prestigious Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, is the memorial volume for Klaus Baer. The late Professor Baer is most noted in Latter-day Saint circles as Hugh Nibley’s Egyptian teacher and for his study of the Joseph Smith papyri. This volume features many important studies, and I would like to highlight several whose importance to readers of this review should be underscored: Edward Brovarski’s study of Abydos in the Old Kingdom contains a nice overview of the role of the viziers in the Old Kingdom. Janet Johnson shows how all “annuity contracts” in ancient Egypt are connected with marriage. Robert Ritner’s publication of the statue of Besa in the Oriental Institute Museum not only shows the preoccupation during the Libyan period with genealogy, but also sheds some light

---

2 Hugh Nibley was, incidentally, Klaus Baer’s first student. His second was David Larkin, now retired from the University of California at Berkeley. Sadly, essays of neither of these men were included.

3 Edward Brovarski, “Abydos in the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period, Part II,” in For His Ka, 15–44.

4 Janet H. Johnson, “‘Annuity Contracts’ and Marriage,” in For His Ka, 113–32.
on the selection of Nebwenenef as High Priest of Amon by oracular means.  

Eric Doret’s study on some of the inscriptions of Ankhtifi is a response to a study of Harco Willems. What makes it interesting for Latter-day Saints is that Doret accepts Willems’s analysis of the phrase zḥ.t ḫpš=f as referring to ritual slaughter of humans. However, Doret differs from Willems by arguing that “the curses addressed to those who might desecrate any part of the tomb are therefore not linked with cult festivals, during which, and were it only symbolically, punishment was inflicted.” The ongoing discussion of whether or not, or under what circumstances, Egyptians practiced human sacrifice has some bearing on the book of Abraham.

These studies accentuate the Egyptological researches of Baer’s numerous students, yet they are not what Baer was noted

6 Eric Doret, “Ankhtifi and the Description of His Tomb at Mo’alla,” in For His Ka, 79–86.
8 Doret, “Ankhtifi,” 80 n. A.
9 Ibid., 81.
for in Latter-day Saint circles. In the words of Terry Wilfong: "Perhaps no work of Klaus Baer attracted more outside attention than his article ‘The Breathing Permit of Hôr: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham,’ an elegant translation of some of the Joseph Smith papyri owned by the Mormon Church.” We could quibble with Wilfong’s assessment because of his apparent ignorance of the name of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but more significantly we should note that, as is almost admitted by Wilfong, the papyrus Baer translated was not *P. Joseph Smith XI–X* but *P. Louvre 3284*; where *P. Joseph Smith XI–X* matched *P. Louvre 3284* the translation of the latter was put in italics. This is not to impugn Baer’s work in the least; he was clear about what he was doing, but others, including Wilfong, are less clear about what Baer did. One of the problems that many have in discussing *P. Joseph Smith XI–X* is that it is an abbreviated text. *P. Louvre 3284* has the full text, of which *P. Joseph Smith XI–X* contains phrases that are usually not even complete sentences.

Due to Baer’s work on the Joseph Smith papyri, John A. Larson, the archivist of the Oriental Institute, has gathered together information on the Joseph Smith papyri for an Egyptological audience. Larson’s work is an important advance in work by Egyptologists on this subject because of his attempt to remain neutral on the topic and not to antagonize Latter-day Saints by his writings. Nonetheless, he unavoidably reveals his own opinions and biases on several topics, best encapsulated as follows:

When they are judged according to the standards of modern professional Egyptology, Joseph Smith’s translations can, at best, be described as unorthodox. Nevertheless, the position of the Mormon prophet is

---


12 Terry G. Wilfong, “The Egyptological Papers of Klaus Baer in the Oriental Institute Museum Archives,” in *For His Ka*, 323.

secure within the early history of American speculation about ancient Egypt.\textsuperscript{14}

Speculation, however, is not the same thing as translation, and in drawing "a comparison of Joseph Smith's translation with those of a modern professional Egyptologist,"\textsuperscript{15} Larson has begged the crucial and controversial question of whether the two translations are of the same text (the same mistake might have been made in the index of texts and objects cited). Larson un-avoidably reveals his own biases because on some issues it is impossible to take a neutral stand, but significantly he shows that it is possible to deal with the subject without being inflammatory toward a group of more than nine million that has been known to fund such things as archaeological expeditions and publications in one's field.\textsuperscript{16} Larson has made long strides from the strident rhetoric of S. A. B. Mercer, or Albert Lythgoe, for example. Egyptologists should follow Larson's lead in this matter, and Latter-day Saints should be grateful.

Larson's "Select Bibliography of the Joseph Smith Papyri" wisely avoids most extremist publications. Unfortunately, it is also twenty years out of date; while there is nothing before 1964, there is also nothing listed after 1975. Curiously, Larson also omitted an entire year of Nibley's series "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" from May 1969–April 1970. He has also strangely omitted a work that has appeared in mainline Egyptological journals on the subject.\textsuperscript{17}

Larson also uses the worst illustrations of the facsimiles from the book of Abraham instead of using the original woodcuts, which have been in every English edition of the Pearl of Great Price since 1981, are included in the Encyclopaedia of Mormonism,

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 160 n. 2.
and are even included in books Larson lists in his bibliography.\textsuperscript{18} The crucial importance of using the original woodcuts rather than second- or thirdhand copies has been pointed out in Egyptological literature where photocopies of the originals have been published.\textsuperscript{19} The Oriental Institute and its Epigraphic Survey pride themselves on setting the standard for meticulous detail in epigraphic and facsimile work,\textsuperscript{20} thus making this failure both disgraceful and inexcusable.

Larson’s work consists mostly of quotations from Joseph Smith’s journal entries that deal with the papyri. He uses as his text not Dean Jessee’s exemplary critical editions of the journals and histories,\textsuperscript{21} but those of the History of the Church,\textsuperscript{22} supplemented by Scott Faulring’s edition of the journals in the footnotes.\textsuperscript{23} Larson’s statement that “all excerpts from Smith Diaries [i.e., Faulring’s edition—Larson has introduced an unnecessary, and potentially both confusing and misleading, ghost reference here] are transcribed exactly as published, including strike throughs, underlining, etc.” is not true; all underlining is Larson’s, which he has introduced to show where Faulring’s edition differs from the History of the Church, but unfortunately he

\textsuperscript{18} Todd, The Saga of the Book of Abraham, 230–32.
\textsuperscript{19} Freeman, “The Osiris-Sheshonq Hypocephalus,” 4–9. Reuben Hedlock’s woodcut is plate 2.
\textsuperscript{22} B. H. Roberts, ed., The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976).
relegates the original to the footnotes. Larson also too easily accepts Faulring’s occasionally misleading use of explanatory brackets, which Latter-day Saint historians will find as irritating as Egyptologists find the use of Budge or Mercer. Curiously, Larson’s bibliography actually contains better treatments of the subject than his article.

Larson’s study is a florilegium, not a critical study. For example, the study quotes two different versions of the same meeting of Joseph Smith with Josiah Quincy and Charles Francis Adams; the discrepancies in these versions show the need for caution in using many of the sources. Compare the description of the authorship of the papyrus given by these two men with what Joseph Smith himself published about the same subject.

**Joseph Smith**: “purporting to be the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus.”

**Charles Francis Adams**: “written by the hand of Abraham.”

**Josiah Quincy**: “That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful.”

The statements by Adams and Quincy can be seen as progressive garblings of Joseph Smith’s published statement. Yet the garbling significantly affects the meaning. Thus Josiah Quincy’s statement has been wrongly taken to prove that Joseph Smith thought that Ptolemaic or Roman period manuscripts were actually in Abraham’s handwriting, but Joseph only seems to have made a statement about to whom the manuscript attributed its authorship. Quincy’s other statements that he both writes about and attributes to Joseph Smith indicate that he wished to make fun of the prophet and was hardly a dispassionate reporter of events. Quincy and others reporting about the papyri from their conversations with Joseph Smith or from secondhand comments even

---

24 See for example, Larson, “Joseph Smith and Egyptology,” 165 n. 19, in which Larson tacitly introduces underlining. The underlined word is worth emphasizing, but the emphasis is Larson’s. See also ibid., 165 n. 21.


27 As cited in ibid., 172.
from Joseph’s friends or family are not necessarily accurate in their reporting of details and must be used with extreme caution in trying to reconstruct Joseph’s understanding of the papyri, particularly when they contradict statements Joseph himself published about those papyri. In general, when visitors describe what they themselves saw, they are firsthand sources; when they report what someone says about the papyrus, they are secondhand or hearsay sources.28 For example, when Quincy reports that “the parchment last referred to showed a rude drawing of a man and woman, and a serpent walking upon a pair of legs” we may conclude that he is describing a particular vignette on an actual papyrus. Although there are some similarities between this description and vignettes in *P. Joseph Smith IV* (man [Ptah] and woman) and *P. Joseph Smith V* (woman and serpent walking on a pair of legs), this could likely be a reference to portions of papyrus that we do not at present have. His attributions of “handwriting” and “autograph,” however, may be discounted as hearsay. To date, no study of the Joseph Smith papyri has considered all statements about the papyri and critically analyzed them to sift eyewitness accounts from hearsay.

One regrettable drawback of Larson’s study is its incompleteness. There are early newspaper accounts describing the papyri in Ohio that he missed.29 He has missed almost half a dozen references to the papyri by Joseph Smith in 1835–36 alone.30 Larson asserts that “there seems to be no published record of the westward movement of the mummies and papyri with the Mormons from Kirtland, Ohio, into Missouri,”31 ignorant of published

28 The methodological point has been made before by Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 152–53, and throughout 151–75.


30 For instance Joseph Smith’s journal entries for 3 October 1835, 23 November 1835, 25 November 1835, 15 December 1835, and 20 December 1835; Larson’s record of a 31 December 1835 entry (“Joseph Smith and Egyptology,” 166–67) is a ghost entry (see ibid., 167 n. 28).

sources that discuss precisely that.\textsuperscript{32} Several significant non-Mormon sources also describe the papyri during the Nauvoo period.\textsuperscript{33}

Larson has made a stride forward, especially for an Egyptologist.\textsuperscript{34} Getting accurate information into the hands of Egyptologists should be an improvement, since, I regret to report, the most ridiculous statements about the Joseph Smith papyri often come not from anti-Mormons but from Egyptologists, mainly because they know next to nothing about them. For instance, I heard one great and learned Egyptologist, whom I will not embarrass by naming, emphatically state that the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon from the Book of the Dead.\textsuperscript{35} I am more than willing to consider this Egyptologist’s opinions within his sphere of expertise, but currently the Joseph Smith papyri are clearly outside it.

Unfortunately, some Egyptologists have printed their comments, so they cannot be kept anonymous. One scholar trained in Egyptology recently wrote the following:

In Kirtland, Ohio, he [Michael Chandler] sold at least part of this collection, reportedly for six thousand dollars, to members of the Church of Latter-day Saints, whose leader, Joseph Smith, “translated” a copy of the Book of the Dead included in the sale as a hitherto

\textsuperscript{32} For example, the record of Anson Call, Manuscript Journal, summer of 1838, in Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 98.


\textsuperscript{34} Consider the fanciful garbling of history in Freeman, “The Osiris-Sheshong Hypocephalus,” 6–7.

\textsuperscript{35} In response to the comment by the above-mentioned Egyptologist, François Neveu give an impressively accurate description of the Book of Mormon. Obviously, knowledge varies from individual to individual. The Joseph Smith papyri are not generally an object of study by Egyptologists and information about them is not generally part of their training.
unknown work written by the Hebrew patriarch Abraham (see fig. 2 [facsimile 2]).

Any count of the mistakes in this one sentence is embarrassingly high. The sale amount is over twice the actual price ($2400). The name of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is given inaccurately. Most critics of Joseph Smith identify the text they think Joseph translated as a Book of Breathing. And the pièce de resistance is the identification of a hypocephalus as a Book of the Dead. Larson’s work might have saved this poor professor from making a fool of himself in print. Sadly most Egyptologists have failed to make any more effort than this archaeologist to get their facts straight.

The Legacy of Doni Peterson

Many deficiencies in historical sources present in Larson’s study are remedied in H. Doni Peterson’s new volume. We are fortunate that Peterson finished the manuscript of his magnum opus before his death. Book of Abraham studies have lost a singular individual who has made his own particular and lasting contribution to the field. Most of what we know about the journey of the Joseph Smith papyri from Thebes to Kirtland and many details about the journey from Kirtland to Salt Lake City we owe to the dedicated researches of Doni Peterson and his assistants.

Although Peterson was not particularly prolific, talented, or well trained, his work is not only important but sets a significant

---


example. Back in 1967, when the papyri appeared on the scene again, Peterson discovered a large gap of basic information that needed to be filled and spent the rest of his life trying to fill it. Granted, few people doubted the authenticity of the Joseph Smith papyri. Still, thanks to Peterson, we can now trace the provenance of the papyri from Antonio Lebolo’s excavations in Thebes to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio. In fact, thanks to Peterson’s work we now know more about the provenance and travels of the Joseph Smith papyri than about any other comparable find. 38 Where he could not read the Italian documents, he got someone who could. It is sad that some of his colleagues continue to recycle old lectures and Sunday School lessons into publications when there is still much basic work to be done and when the materials for this work are mostly within an hour’s drive of their homes. Donl Peterson has provided an example of what can be done with some effort. 39

Peterson actually has at least three stories to tell: The story of the Joseph Smith papyri, the story of the publication of the book of Abraham, and the story of his research into these topics. In telling these three stories as well as making accessible several unpublished or inaccessible primary sources, Peterson jumps around a great deal, unfortunately sometimes making a very interesting story flat and confusing in the process. Chapters 8–14 are the most confused in ordering, whereas chapters 15–19 have the smoothest flow.

Despite the book’s problems, Peterson has done us all a great service by publishing many new primary sources here for the first time. Not only that, at important points Peterson makes some

---


39 For instance, how many of the apostles of this dispensation have been the subjects of even basic biographies, much less good ones?
insightful observations that are exactly right. Noteworthy are the following:

1. “The present text of the book of Abraham does not deal with Abraham while he was [in] Egypt, but only some preliminary experiences he has prior to going there. He was on his way to Egypt from Ur, by way of Haran, with a stop in Shechem, when the story ends” (Peterson, p. 153). This observation shows why much of the criticism of the book of Abraham is misguided and moot. To take a recent example, one Egyptologist kindly informed Latter-day Saints that a place name Ur in the land “of the Chaldees” was not attested as an Egyptian personal name in Abraham’s day, or even in the New Kingdom. But why should it be? Are we supposed to be grateful to this man for proving that Ur of the Chaldees (along with everywhere else visited by Abraham in the present book of Abraham) was not located in Egypt?

2. It is normally assumed that if the book of Abraham were written by Abraham on papyrus, that that papyrus was left in Egypt when the patriarch moved back to the land of Canaan. “However, it is possible that the sacred writings of the two prophets [Abraham and Joseph] were not left behind in Egypt” (Peterson, p. 34). Peterson suggests seven different scenarios for how they could have arrived back in Egypt (Peterson, pp. 34–35). I have, independently, made the same suggestion, with several different scenarios. Two of Peterson’s scenarios involve transmission via Christianity, an unlikely possibility, since the papyri date somewhere between the third century B.C. and the late first century A.D. at the latest.

3. Peterson (p. 176) brings forth cogent evidence that “discredits Michael H. Chandler’s claims to any blood relationship with Antonio Lebolo.” One of Donl Peterson’s objectives was to prove that Chandler’s story was correct. “It is painful to conclude,” he reports, “but my research leads me to believe that Chandler fabricated that part of the report” (Peterson, p. 256).

41 Gee, “Abraacadabra, Isaac and Jacob,” 72–73.
42 I have previously pointed out (ibid., 71 n. 272) that the conventional dating of the papyri has been questioned. I have been working on the problem and will publish the results when I stop running across new information.
Chandler also lied about how he obtained the mummies and exaggerated information about the excavation of the mummies and papyri. These stories have been faithfully repeated through the years, and there is thus no reason to be puzzled (as Peterson is) when someone like Parley P. Pratt gives the story from memory and includes inconsistent details (Peterson, pp. 178–83). The sources that Peterson uncovered in his researches are more reliable than Chandler. And Chandler may not have been the only one who exaggerated their story of how they were instruments in getting the papyri into Latter-day Saint hands. If we remember that Chandler and Lebolo were not Latter-day Saints and that we do not have to expect them to live by the standards of the Latter-day Saints (which even Latter-day Saints too often struggle to maintain), then we perhaps will not feel the need to exonerate Lebolo for his attempted murder of Belzoni, or Chandler for lying.

**Recommendations**

If the most disappointing feature of Larson’s work is that he has nothing new to say, since no evidence that he presents has not been published in this connection before or been available for years, the same cannot be said of Donl Peterson’s work, which anyone doing serious research on this subject will simply have to have, if only because it contains extensive quotations of primary sources or generally inaccessible works. Larson’s work does do a great service by providing some generally accurate background information to an audience that has not had access to it before in a nonpolemical manner. Despite any drawbacks, I can recommend both Larson’s and Peterson’s work for different reasons; Harris’s work, however, needs to be used with extreme caution. More work in this area that is both interesting and accurate is still desired.

---

43 After working through Henry Fischer’s meticulous notes in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Aziz Atiya’s correspondence with Fischer on the matter, I find it impossible to believe that Fischer did not know that the Metropolitan owned the papyri and knew exactly what they had. I find Atiya’s story repeated in Peterson, *Story of the Book of Abraham*, 238–42, truly incredible. I understand Fischer was justifiably furious at Atiya’s story.

Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson

**Constancy amid Change**

Have I done any good in the world today?
Have I helped anyone in need? . . .
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure,
A blessing of duty and love.¹

*Behind the Mask of Mormonism* is a reprint of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism: The Truth about the Mormon Church*, by Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. John Weldon, which was first published in 1992.² Its copyright page notes the title change and features a new ISBN number, but is otherwise almost exactly identical to the corresponding page in the earlier printing. This printing is a rather silently revised edition. Its pagination is almost precisely what it was before. And its copyright date remains 1992.

In 1993, I published a lengthy and highly critical review of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*, detailing scores of errors and distortions in that volume.³ So you can perhaps imagine my disappointment when it seemed that Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon had changed nothing of their book beyond its name. For example, they persist in demanding (on pp. 285–86) that Latter-day Saint scholars furnish examples of

---

¹ “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, No. 223.
² The doubled “Dr.” before the name of John Weldon represents, as accurately as I can determine, the number of doctorates that he claims. See appendix ³.
Nephi's coinage, despite the fact that not a single verse of the Book of Mormon ever mentions the word *coin* or any variant thereof. Furthermore, although I alerted them to this error, they continue (on p. 479 n. 262) to cite, typically at second hand, a book by Orrin Porter Rockwell that they entitle *Man of God, Son of Thunder*. However, according to Harold Schindler's biography of that interesting nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint, which bears the title *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder*, "Rockwell could not read or write." And they persevere (on pp. 285–86) in their tacit ultimatum that defenders of the Book of Mormon locate, to their satisfaction, "the plains of Nephaha." If we do not, they implicitly propose, we should yield up our claim that it records genuine history. (This despite the fact that, as I pointed out to them three years ago, no such place is ever mentioned in the Book of Mormon.) In reusing old, discredited material, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon are doing that which has been done in other anti-Mormon writings since the pioneering days of Alexander Campbell (1831) and Philastus Hurlbut and Eber D. Howe (1834), whose works they actually cite and promote in their book. (See appendix 1 for a particularly entertaining example of recycling efforts by two other professional anti-Mormons.)

But, as you have no doubt already been thinking to yourself, something must have changed, or the book would not be receiving yet another (albeit, this time, slightly briefer) review. And you are quite correct. A cursory scan of the reprinting revealed that, despite its 1992 copyright date, *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* refers to at least two books that first appeared in 1993 and to four that were published in 1994 (p. 230; p. 480 nn. 1, 2, 4, 9, 11).

So Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon had made some changes, after all. Indeed, it soon became apparent that they had also included a new appendix designed, essentially, to respond to my review. Their comments therein appeared to confirm my initial judgment that they had not corrected the mistakes I had

---


5 As another example, compare pages 303–4 in the two books. There are many, many more veiled changes, but it would be tedious (and pointless) to try to locate all of them.
pointed out for them, for they give the distinct impression that they do not like me and that they did not like my review of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism.* It was, they said, "unfounded," "judicious," full of "inaccurate comments and misinterpretations" and "incompetent claims and false arguments" (p. 480 n. 3). It was "deceptive," too, and "misleading and condescending" (p. 451). Furthermore, it was "ad hominem" and "sarcastic" (p. 451; 480 n. 3). The bottom line, they reported, was that my vicious, lying, inept review had "proved nothing of substance" (p. 451).

"The Mormon church," announce Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, "retains two central problems that continue to plague its credibility." One of these, they say, is "its refusal to deal forthrightly with the persuasive arguments of critics within and without the church. . . . The deceptive review of this book by Mormon

---

scholar Daniel C. Peterson...is a case in point” (p. 451).7 Darn. And here I thought I had done just that. I had devoted 86 pages to a laborious critique of their book, with 188 (often quite lengthy) footnotes. I had tried to deal seriously with the issues. But I had evidently failed. Failed miserably. And, in so failing, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon report to their readers, I effectively also discredited the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. “In essence,” they say, “Mormons who won’t deal with historical and biblical facts is [sic] the real issue here” (p. 453).

1. The Changes

I could only hang my head in shame. Their refusal to take me seriously had, it would seem, been abundantly justified. I was unworthy of the company of civilized human beings, let alone of real scholars such as Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon. But then, a ray of light pierced my dark depression. Browsing through *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, I began to notice that, in fact, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon had paid attention to me after all. For instance, a quick survey of 40 of the misspellings and other obvious mechanical errors that I had noted in their book’s first printing reveals that fully 34 of those errors, exactly 85% of them, have been corrected.8

Indeed, I soon discovered that it was not only typographical errors and weird spellings that had quietly been rectified in this reprinting. Permit me to share a few examples of what I have in mind:

---

7 Emphasis deleted from the original.
8 Unfortunately, in the course of my survey I noticed errors that I had overlooked in the earlier printing, errors that have survived into this version. These include such little items as “principle” for “principal” (p. 29), “Milton V. Blackman, Jr.,” for “Milton V. Backman, Jr.” (p. 270), “L.S.T. Rasmussen” for “Ellis T. Rasmussen” (p. 300), and “Irving Hexham” for “Irving Hexam” (p. 459 n. 5). On page 480 n. 3, Ankerberg and Weldon complain that my first review implied that “a relatively few typographical, typesetter, and dictation-induced phonetic errors prove [their] scholarship is sloppy.” This is not true. I implied that a great *many* such errors prove their scholarship sloppy. And attributing mistakes to phonetic and dictation problems does not excuse their failure to proofread their work. Such inaccuracy would be marked down in an undergraduate student’s paper, to say nothing of a published book (especially in a second, heavily—if covertly—revised edition).
My review criticized Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon for using Doctrine and Covenants 135:3 to demonstrate Joseph Smith’s alleged boastfulness. They were, I said, apparently operating on the assumption that the author of the passage in question was Joseph Smith. But he was not. John Taylor wrote it. Now, in Behind the Mask of Mormonism (p. 52), John Taylor is identified as the author of Doctrine and Covenants 135.9

Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon twice referred to the “mandatory tithing” required of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My review pointed out the falsity of their statement, and the word “mandatory” has been dropped from Behind the Mask of Mormonism. One of the altered passages now alludes to the Church’s profiteering from the “faithful tithing” (which is not quite the same thing) of its dupes.10

In their attempt to discredit the Latter-day Saint practice of baptism for the dead, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon described the early Christian sect known as the Marcionites, who also knew and practiced a form of the ordinance, as “pagan.” But this, as I pointed out, is a flat historical untruth. Behind the Mask of Mormonism has dropped the charge of paganism against the Marcionites.11

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism complacently declared that “no biblical scholar considers Mormonism to be a Christian religion.” I remarked that this was clearly untrue, since, at the very least, Latter-day Saint specialists on the Bible consider themselves to be Christians, and since, furthermore, many others presumably either agree with them or else have never given the question a moment’s thought. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon now inform their readers that “no conservative biblical scholar considers Mormonism to be a Christian religion”—which is a rather different proposition and may well

9 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 6; Everything/Behind the Mask, 52.
10 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 6; Everything/Behind the Mask, 28 (compare 29), emphasis added.
11 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 6–7; Everything/Behind the Mask, 240.
still be false.¹² (How do they define *conservative*? Must a scholar, to be conservative, be of the sort who would deny that Latter-day Saints are Christians? I rather suspect so, in which case their new declaration is just about as significant as would be the announcement that no bachelor is a married man.)

- Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon ridiculed the Book of Mormon for its silly story about snakes erecting hedges. I observed, however, that no such story occurs in the Book of Mormon, and that they had apparently dreamed it up themselves. It has now vanished from their book.¹³

- Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon praised Charles Crane, one of their anti-Mormon colleagues, as “a college professor and expert on Mormon archaeology.” I pointed out that he is no expert at all, and now he has become merely “a college professor and author of *The Bible and Mormon Scriptures Compared.*” (Anyone who has read *The Bible and Mormon Scriptures Compared* can testify that this change represents a serious demotion.) Elsewhere, Crane has fallen from the exalted status of “an expert on Mormon archaeology” to being merely “a professor knowledgeable on Mormon archaeology.”¹⁴ (The distinction should be clear enough. I am knowledgeable on grand opera, but I am certainly no expert and would never dream of writing a book on the subject. Many men are knowledgeable about football, but very few stand much chance of being hired to coach a team in the NFL.)

- *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism* claimed that “Some Mormons teach that ‘through baptism for the dead . . . the Mormons have saved more souls than Christ did when he died on the cross.’” But this is plainly ridiculous, since absolutely nobody can be saved without the atonement of Christ,

---

¹² Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 6 n. 11; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 376, emphasis added.

¹³ Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 7; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 302.

while many, having received baptism during their lifetimes, will be saved without baptism for the dead. The statement is absurd. A subset cannot be larger than its parent set. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s claim is rather like announcing that there are more dogs than there are mammals. I said so, and I also found their source for it—a third- or fourthhand retelling by hostile witnesses of a comment allegedly made by an anonymous Mormon—extremely dubious. Behind the Mask of Mormonism, yielding ground but not quite willing to abandon completely so useful a weapon, now says that “some Mormons allegedly teach” this preposterous idea.15

- *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism* had claimed that Joseph Smith’s final cry of “Oh Lord, my God,” uttered while jumping from the window of the Carthage Jail and just before his murder by a mob of anti-Mormons, was an “expression of unbelief.” I found this assertion incomprehensible, and thought it probably more indicative of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s deep disdain for everything connected with Mormonism than of Joseph Smith’s views. Behind the Mask of Mormonism now says that the exclamation was an “expression of surprise,” which seems equally untenable but at least has the minor merit that it does not directly contradict the obvious content of the cry itself.16

- Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon ridiculed the presence of the seemingly Greek names *Timothy* and *Jonas* in the Book of Mormon. I observed that they had not kept up with Latter-day Saint scholarship on this issue, and they have now, to their credit, dropped the matter without the slightest attempt at self-defense. (Indeed, without any hint that they ever brought the subject up in the first place.)17

- Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon once said that the existence of the words *Alpha* and *Omega* in the Book of Mormon proved it a fraud, since there was, they said, no Greek among the

15 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 20; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 177.
16 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 28; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 351.
17 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 52; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 322.
purported Nephites. In my review, however, I pointed out that the Book of Mormon is a translation and explained that translators have wide latitude in choosing the vocabulary they will use to represent what they find in the text from which they are working. Alpha and Omega have now disappeared without trace from *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*.18

- The same principle applies to the word *adieu*, in Jacob 7:27, which Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon once thought to be a conclusive refutation of the Book of Mormon’s antiquity, since French (hah hah) did not exist in the sixth century before Christ. Responding, I remarked that, of all the anti-Mormon arguments I have come across (and they are legion), this certainly ranks as one of the stupidest. Now, in *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have forgotten all about it.19 (As *Saturday Night Live’s* Miss Emily Litella would have said, “Never mind!”)

- *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism* thought the story of Nephi’s building a temple in the New World ludicrously implausible. I showed that it was not, and *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* has now abandoned the criticism. Nothing remains to show that it was ever there.20

- Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon claimed in the earlier printing of their book to see a contradiction between certain of the Book of Mormon’s statements about the presence of gold and silver and other precious materials in the Americas. I demonstrated that there was no contradiction, and, quietly, the argument has utterly vanished.21

Such alterations are especially fascinating, coming, as they do, from a pair of writers who profess to be highly offended by what they describe as “secret changes . . . in the Mormon

---

18 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 60; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 322.
19 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 60; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 322.
20 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 78–80; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 322.
21 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 81–82; *Everything/Behind the Mask*, 322.
scripts" (p. 305). These "corrections, additions, deletions, etc." in Latter-day Saint documents were, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon allege, "all . . . done without any indication or acknowledgment of such action" (p. 317). "There isn't a single LDS-produced standard work," they quote the late "Dr." Walter Martin as saying, "that hasn't undergone hundreds and even thousands of changes, additions, deletions, and corrections, many of which are much more than 'typographical' in nature, and all of which were done without indications or acknowledgement of the actions taken" (p. 305). "It is inconceivable" they declare, "that any bona fide church would permit the alteration of what it truly believed were divine scriptures, let alone alter them itself and then keep such misrepresentations secret" (p. 305).

Now, my review discussed these allegations of secret changes in Mormon texts, and I presented evidence to show that there has been no attempted cover-up on the matter. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have not troubled themselves to refute me; they have simply republished the same baseless accusations in *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* as if repetition equals proof. But if there is no reason in this regard to find the Mormons guilty of "subterfuge and deception" (p. 312), as our two friends kindly put it, what are we to say of the stealth-editing that we find in this new version of their accusatory book? What clearer illustration could one ask for of "changes, additions, deletions, and corrections . . . all . . . done without any indication or acknowledgment of such action"? And if Latter-day Saint leaders have, in some cases, altered their texts under the claimed inspiration of God, what of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, who furtively changed their book on the basis, it would seem, of a review that, they proclaim, "proved nothing of substance"?

2. Problems That Remain

Of course, even with their revisions this remains a stupefyingly bad book. It is one of the most uncharitable and unpleasant things I have ever read, worse by far even than most other anti-
Mormon writing. It is unrelentingly negative, unremittingly hostile, and not overly scrupulous in its methods of attack. I stand by my earlier review, and I reiterate it with respect to the book’s recent reappearance under the rather lurid new title *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon are upset about my “sarcastic and invective [sic] portrayal of this book as ‘bigoted, intolerant, ugly, incompetent and dishonest’” (p. 451). I must apologize. I did not mean to seem sarcastic. To set the record straight, let me define, as clearly and precisely and dispassionately as I am able to do, my serious, considered opinion of the book, even after its change of title and after the cosmetic alterations Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have made to small portions of its text: It is bigoted, intolerant, ugly, incompetent, and dishonest. It is an unexcelled illustration of the old maxim that bigotry consists in being certain of something one knows nothing about. My previous review, I think, establishes that quite conclusively, and Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have made far too few changes to redeem what seems to me, frankly, a wretched specimen of fundamentalist Protestant hate literature.

*Behind the Mask of Mormonism* continues to mislead its readers with palpable falsehoods, including assertions that “Mormon teaching [denies] God, Christ, salvation, the Bible, etc.” (p. 368), that Mormonism rejects “the blood atonement of Christ” (p. 199), that Mormons “attack” the Bible (p. 376) and even God himself (p. 119), and that Latter-day Saints look forward to “the Second Coming of the god Joseph Smith” with the same enthusiasm and doctrinal emphasis that they show for the return of the Savior Jesus Christ (p. 22). It continues flagrantly to distort the teaching of the Book of Mormon on plural marriage (p. 410). It continues to ignore Mormon scholarship, while loudly crowing that such scholarship does not exist (as at pp. 285, 294–95). It still implies, despite my informing its authors to the contrary, that the New World Archaeological Foundation at Brigham Young University was set up to prove the Book of Mormon, and insists that the Foundation has been a failure (pp. 289–90).24 Despite my detailed seventeen-page demonstration to the contrary, *Behind the

---

24 I intend to treat this subject in some detail in an upcoming issue of the *FARMS Review of Books*. 
Mask of Mormonism still maintains, falsely, that Alma 7:10 is an incorrect prophecy that Jesus would be born in the city of Jerusalem (p. 364; cf. 353). It persists in baselessly slandering the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, while taking no notice of the abundant evidence that confirms their integrity and supports their testimonies (pp. 295–99, 446). It continues to allege that Latter-day Saints are "hypocrites" (p. 382), "unethical" (p. 422; cf. 81, 86), and deceivers. It insists, still, on branding the leaders of the Church as liars. (The book’s motto, wherein it boasts that it covers absolutely everything about Mormonism—spanning the entire range “From Its Early Schemes to Its Modern Deceptions”—has now been brought from the back cover to the front.) Behind the Mask of Mormonism still insists on depicting the Latter-day Saints as idolaters (p. 154) and as pagans. It continues to defame devout Mormons, saying that their faith is motivated, essentially, by a mixture of greed for power (p. 29n) and ravenous sexual lust (pp. 151–52, 211). It continues to demean Latter-day Saint religious belief, terming it “bizarre” (p. 217) and dismissing it as the product, merely, of “a process of seemingly deliberate self-deception” (p. 99; cf. 300), or, alternatively, of “ignorance and conditioning” (p. 354). It relies, once again, on the testimony of discredited charlatans such as Ed Decker (pp. 250, 441–42) and the late Dee Jay Nelson (p. 316), as well as on hostile thirdhand gossip (p. 466 n. 117; cf. p. 307). It obstinately insists on leveling gratuitous charges of religiously motivated homicide against nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints (p. 391). It persists in comparing members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the “Flat Earth Society” (p. 373),

26 See pages 13, 15, 90n, 102, 303, 312, 341, 362, 410, 412, 443, 446.
27 And, in the new, unchanged printing, it has been corrected. It no longer reads “From It’s [sic] Early Schemes to It’s [sic] Modern Deceptions.” Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 4, had noted the earlier error.
and, less amusingly, to the murderous Manson family (pp. 391–94, 400–401) and even to Lucifer himself (p. 211).

Of course, Mormons should not feel singled out by their being linked with Satan. In the eyes of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, all religions that disagree with fundamentalist Protestantism seem to be satanic. Elsewhere, for instance, they define the faith of the world’s nearly one billion Muslims as “spiritistic” or “demonic,” and ignorantly describe Allah, the object of worship in Islam, as an evil, pagan deity. They are evidently unaware that


31 John Ankerberg and John Weldon, The Facts on Islam (Eugene: Harvest House, 1991), 9–12, 14, 18, 24, 33, 40n, 42–44. Even some of their fellow evangelicals know better than this. See, for instance, Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 13–15. Incidentally, although Allah has no necessary connection to paganism, it can be plausibly argued that the God preached by Ankerberg and Weldon does. From the days of the early “Apologists” Aristides of Athens (A.D. 140) and St. Justin Martyr (A.D. 155), hellenized Christians attempted to show that Christians worshipped the same God as their sophisticated pagan neighbors. This was also the position of the illustrious Origen of Alexandria. See G. L. Prestige, Fathers and Heretics (London: SPCK, 1940), 63. On page 65, Prestige endorses that great Christian theologian’s own self-description: “Origen,” he writes, “and not the third-rate professors of a dying sophistry and nerveless superstition, stood in the true succession from Plato and Aristotle in the history of pure thought.” “For over a century,” says the noted historian Robert Wilken, “since the time when the Apologists first began to offer a reasoned and philosophical presentation of Christianity to pagan intellectuals, Christian thinkers had claimed that they worshipped the same God honored by the Greeks and Romans, in other words, the deity adored by other reasonable men and women. Indeed, Christians adopted precisely the same language to describe God as did pagan intellectuals. The Christian apologist Theophilus of Antioch described God as “ineffable ... inexpressible ... uncontainable ... incomprehensible ... inconceivable ... incomparable ... unteachable ... immutable ... inexpressible ... without beginning because he was uncreated, immutable because he is immortal” (Ad Autolyicum I, 3–4). This view, that God was an immaterial, timeless, and impassible divine being, who is known through the mind alone, became a keystone of Christian apologetics, for it served to establish a decisive link to the Greek spiritual and intellectual tradition.” See Robert L. Wilken, The Christians as the Romans Saw Them (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 151. Such efforts to demonstrate that the Christian God was identical to the God of sophisticated paganism continued as long as there were pagans to impress—i.e., well into the fifth century—although
the word Allāh is closely related to the Hebrew word Elohim, and that it is simply the Arabic equivalent of the English word God. (It is so used throughout the Arabic Bible.)32 Thus Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon, in denouncing the Muslims as heathenish devil-worshipers, also blithely condemn millions of their Arab Christian brothers and sisters. So it is hardly surprising that, throughout, and despite my earlier protest, Behind the Mask of Mormonism continues to slander the faith of the Latter-day Saints as a form of satanism.

Still, to the extent that I have enabled Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon to recognize a few of their grosser errors and worst arguments, and to replace them with others perhaps not quite so shoddy, I am pleased. They didn’t thank me on their dedication page, it is true. I can honestly say, though, that I don’t mind that. And I am not bitter about their failure to offer me any financial compensation for my editorial services to them. I am happy to have been of assistance. I only wish I could have helped much more.

Indeed, I should like, here, to offer a few suggestions that they might want to incorporate into the next printing of this book, when it will presumably come out with an even less subtle title than the one it now bears (perhaps something along the lines of How to Profit from Whipping Up Hatred and Contempt for the Evil, Stupid Mormon Deceivers):

• Since they have established my unspeakable nastiness beyond dispute, it might now be useful for the tender-hearted Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon to turn to the actual issues that I raised. “Although Peterson is skilled in ad hominem reviews,”

it seems that the majority of early rank-and-file Christians deeply distrusted the attempts of these intellectuals to clothe Christianity in the garments of pagan Greek philosophy. See Wilken, The Christians as the Romans Saw Them. 78–79, 151–52, 154. Nonetheless, this hellenized deity is the God of the classical creeds and, consequently, the God of Christians who, like Ankerberg and Weldon, accept those creeds.

32 For that matter, Allāh is the term used in biblical translations into Turkish and Indonesian and several other Arabic-influenced languages. John Mark Terry, “Approaches to the Evangelization of Muslims,” Evangelical Missions Quarterly 32/2 (April 1996): 173, quite properly advises his fellow Protestant missionaries, with regard to Muslim terminology, that “They should feel free to use the names Allah and Isa (Jesus).”
they write on page 451 of *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, “we found so many errors in his critique that it is difficult to trust anything he alleges regarding the supposed errors of our research or his defense of Mormonism.” Well, okay. But it would be very helpful if they would supply specific examples of my errors, accompanied by analysis that shows how I went wrong.

*Behind the Mask of Mormonism* continues to deny that any honest case can be made for the beliefs of the Latter-day Saints. Those who hold such beliefs, therefore, do so only out of ignorance or from a willful intent to deceive. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can, in the implicit view of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, be exhaustively divided, without remainder, into two categories: dupes and con artists. That, they say, is why there are no real arguments for the truth of Mormonism. That is why there is no Mormon apologetics.

Mormonism has no facts to use in its defense, and hence what does not exist cannot be presented. What Mormon apologetic works do is to provide 1) false claims which lack support and 2) what can frequently

---

33 There is a growing consensus among professional anti-Mormons that I am one of the meanest people in Mormondom. For instance, in telephone comments to an acquaintance of mine on 19 March 1996, Mr. Bill McKeever, of Mormonism Research Ministry in El Cajon, California, whom I have not met, described me as “arrogant,” “lacking civility,” “unprofessional,” “belligerent,” and prone to both “belittling people” and “name calling.” Having gotten that out of the way, though, perhaps Mr. McKeever will now refute my published critiques of his work. These include Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 62–78 (which has been in print for three years); Daniel C. Peterson, William J. Hamblin, and Matthew Roper, “On Alma 7:10 and the Birthplace of Jesus Christ” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1995); and Daniel C. Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction: Triptych (Inspired by Hieronymus Bosch),” FARMS Review of Books 8/1 (1996): vi–x. (Mr. McKeever has, in the past, ventured to critique—and to pronounce refuted—unpublished works of mine that he has not read, based only on brief summaries in newspapers. See his comments in the Spring 1994 issue of his periodical, Mormonism Researched, for an example of this peculiar practice.)

34 There is one error that I will confess. In my “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 45, I explain that “Judeo-Arabic, as written for instance by Moses Maimonides, was medieval Hebrew written with Arabic letters.” This is incorrect. As I have known for many years, Judeo-Arabic is a form of Arabic written in Hebrew letters. How the mistake crept into my review, I cannot say. But Ankerberg and Weldon apparently did not notice it.
only be described as carefully worded distortions—alleged "explanations" for the many logical, historical, biblical, and scientific problems raised by their scripture, theology and history. (p. 363)

Accordingly, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon imply, no Latter-day Saint argument even merits examination, for Real Christians know without looking that it will be empty and that an actual test would be a waste of time. "Mormons may have their 'scientific,' 'historical' and 'logical' arguments for their beliefs," they say, "but so does the Flat Earth Society" (p. 373). They thus declare themselves the winners of a race in which nobody else is allowed to compete. And I mean nobody else. Their attitude toward the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is, it would seem, precisely their attitude toward all religions that differ from their own. For example, in their 1991 assault on the faith of Islam they declare that, just like mine, "Muslim apologetics are done primarily by distortion," that "the arguments presented in defense of Islam are largely subjective and"—you guessed it—"prove nothing." In fact, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon observe, Muslim argumentation is (surprise!) merely "ad hominem."35

But this is manifestly disingenuous, or else it is manifest ignorance. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon cannot plausibly persist in their assertion that no serious arguments exist for any religious beliefs other than their own. Some of the most intelligent people who have ever lived—men such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sinā, Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, the Muṭfazilites, Ibn Taymiyya, the Mutakallimūn, and many others—have contended, and contended brilliantly, for the truth of Islam. And those who advocate the truth of the message restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith are themselves not, I think, entirely devoid of training and ability. At any rate, it will not be enough, in my own case, for Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon merely to list the propositions that I have advanced, with expressions of disdain but without any attempt at refutation (as if they were self-evidently absurd). Yet this is basically what they do in Behind the Mask of Mormonism (p. 480

n. 3). They seem to feel that, yes, there are two sides to every question—their side and the wrong one:

Other *ad hominem* and inaccurate comments and misinterpretations regarding our scholarship include: ... baptism for the dead actually *was* practiced by the early Christians; Mormons are *not* guilty of necromancy; the Tanners’ diligent, quality, scholarship is *untrustworthy*; ... there is no valid archeological disproof of the *Book of Mormon*; the Dead Sea Scrolls *confirm* the *Book of Mormon* Isaiah readings; Mormon theology isn’t pagan(!).

With only slight distortions, these statements accurately summarize some of the positions that I took in my review. But I provided, or at least cited, corroborating evidence and argumentation to support each of these notions. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon supply little or nothing that would lead me to retract them. (See appendix 2 for a possible exception.) But they need to deal with my evidence and argumentation, not just wave it aside with airy references to “the insubstantial nature of Mormon apologetics” (p. 263). And why don’t they? As they themselves imply, this should not be a difficult task for them: “In the last few years,” reports *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, “Mormon apologists, such as those associated with F.A.R.M.S., have produced material seeking to answer the challenges posed by critics within and without the church. Such material has not convinced Mormon critics as to its legitimacy. ... Although Mormon technical or scholarly apologetic works can appear convincing, evaluating them carefully shows the flaws inherent in their approach” (p. 265). Unfortunately, up to the present time Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon seem to have kept their devastating but careful evaluations to themselves.

---

36 Exclamation point and emphasis in the original.

37 In fact, on page 433, Ankerberg and Weldon themselves acknowledge that baptism for the dead was practiced by Christians, albeit by “heretical” ones—which, to plodding minds like my own, seems to contradict their implicit claim, quoted just above, that early Christians did no such thing. It is high sport indeed to watch anti-Mormons struggle with 1 Corinthians 15:29. A recent specimen is Mark J. Cares, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons* (Milwaukee:
• In future revisions of their work, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon may want to be a little more explicit about their credentials, which, they themselves say, render them "qualified to evaluate historic Christian belief and doctrine in light of Mormon claims to represent authentic Christianity" (p. 14). For, as things currently stand, it is more than a little bit difficult to make out just what degrees they do have. (See appendix 3.)

• "Concerned with the damaging impact of the Tanners' research," report Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, "the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) began to attack the Tanners' work in 1991 with a series of disingenuous and truthless book reviews in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, edited by Dr. Daniel Peterson" (p. 262). However, lest they fall prey to their own charge of disingenuousness, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon might want to mention that the reviews of the Tanners grew less out of "concern" at the Tanners' writing than out of this Review's mandate to cover everything published on the Book of Mormon. (And, yes—let's be honest—out of a perhaps rather unconventional sense of fun.)

Furthermore, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon's readers might appreciate it if, in future (un)revisions of their book, they would supply the publication data for these appalling FARMS reviews, so that the obvious flaws in them might be put on public display. There is, I have noticed, a widespread sentiment among opponents of the Church, to the effect that Latter-day Saint scholars are in a panic because of their incapacity to respond to the powerful criticisms of Jerald and Sandra Tanner. If this sentiment is well founded, reading our attempts at rebuttal should only confirm it in the minds of objective observers. However, since Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon continue to show considerable reluctance to look at Latter-day Saint scholarship directly, or even

Northwestern, 1993), 44, who confesses his inability to decide what the passage means, but insists that it cannot in any case mean what the Mormons say it does. Then he proceeds to write of "the almost unbelievable nature of LDS biblical interpretation" (ibid, 215). "Their misuse of the Bible would be laughable," he remarks, "if it weren't so damning" (ibid, 216). (This, by the way, is polite and respectful language.) See the review by John W. Welch of "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology," by Roger E. DeMaris, pp. 43–45 of this issue of the FARMS Review of Books.
to mention it, I shall provide the information here, in the hope that they will then simply incorporate it into the next unchanged edition of their book:


[Roper, Matthew. “Comments on the Book of Mormon Witnesses: A Response to Jerald and Sandra Tanner,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (Fall 1993): 164–93, is also relevant.]
My 1993 review of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism* criticized that book for its apparent ignorance of Latter-day Saint scholarship, evidenced in its virtually complete failure to cite any serious Mormon writing at first hand and also, astonishingly, in its complacent denial that such writing is worth a glance or, in more than a few places, that it even exists. ("He that answereth a matter before he heareth it," says Proverbs 18:13, "it is folly and shame unto him.") Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon's seemingly smug attitude was reminiscent of that attributed, fairly or unfairly, to Benjamin Jowett, master of Balliol College, Oxford, in the late 1870s. A satirical ditty popular among the students of Balliol at the time represented him as boasting that

First come I; my name is Jowett.
There's no knowledge but I know it.
I am Master of this college:
What I don't know isn't knowledge.

So, likewise, since Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon are, so far as I can discern, unaware of competent Mormon scholarship and argumentation, they think there is none. But while Benjamin Jowett, that prolific and influential translator of the works of Plato, had justly earned a reputation for prodigious learning, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon—how shall I put this gently?—have not. They seemed, in *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*, to depend almost entirely on Jerald and Sandra Tanner to do their reading, thinking, and evaluation for them. In *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, they still do. Only, now, they do so with an odd kind of defiance. "Some Mormon apologists," they huff, "think that all Christian critics of Mormonism should spend thousands of dollars and man-hours in order to stay abreast of the latest in Mormon defensive scholarship in its numerous forms and offshoots. Specialists like the Tanners may, but we believe it isn't necessary for all Mormon critics to do so" (p. 453).

They would be wise, however, to omit this comment from future 1992 printings of their book. It is a bit too much like going around with a sign taped to your backside reading "Kick me." People who write books should not boast, at least publicly, about their refusal to do adequate research. Even the Tanners themselves
don’t seem to have a great deal of respect for those who rely so slavishly on them:

Sandra Tanner, apparently somewhat embarrassed by discussions of their editorial idiosyncrasies, has justified their practices as follows: “We have found that the average reader cannot read a page of material and digest it to come out with the most important point.” This provides a very interesting insight into the Tanners’ opinion of the intellectual capacity of their intended audience—an insight which I find no reason to question. Sandra Tanner goes on to provide revealing examples supporting her evaluation of their readers. “I realize that the average Library Science major is appalled at that [editorial style] and finds it childish because they’ve been trained to go over and read a page and pick out what’s important. But most people aren’t; most people have not gone to school enough that, I mean, it’s absolutely astounding. I get calls regularly from people wanting to know where they can find this book ‘Ibid’ we keep quoting from. A lady called me up the other day and she says, ‘I thought I knew all the books in the Bible and I can’t find that.’” 38

It appears, however, that this is the kind of audience to which Behind the Mask of Mormonism is addressed. It is an audience ill-equipped to evaluate Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s book critically, and one that is certainly unlikely to look at the Latter-day Saint side of any issue. I would guess that our two authors count on such considerations for their success. So they are back, professing to be irritated at the slights they have allegedly suffered but still peddling, it seems to me, the same uninformed and poisonous bigotry that ruined the first printing of their book. As Talleyrand is reported to have said in quite another, earlier, context, “They have learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing.”

Appendix 1: Drawing on the Tradition

Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. John Weldon provide us a stellar example of how critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have tended to recycle time-worn claims and superannuated arguments as if they were fresh, using and reusing the work of their predecessors, often without credit, and almost always without any acknowledgment of the replies (often lethal) that Latter-day Saints have made. Gary Jacobson, an alert reader of fundamentalist attack-literature who lives in Tempe, Arizona, has noticed a particularly delightful case of this.

In my introduction to FARMS Review of Books 8/1, I mentioned the very peculiar way in which two professional anti-Mormons named Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, in a volume called Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend, had misunderstood an argument that Professor Stephen D. Ricks and I had advanced. But I remarked that I was even more surprised when I found that another, later, book, entitled Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons, perpetuated precisely the same odd misreading. Moreover, noting that the authors of the second book, Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine of the California-based Christian Research Institute, had the subtitle of our book slightly wrong and were substantially in error in their page reference to it, I suggested the possibility that they had never actually looked directly at our book at all.

Mr. Jacobson’s discovery seems to indicate that Rhodes and Bodine do, indeed, have a unique way of using the work of their anti-Mormon predecessors: Reading their book, which was published in 1995, Mr. Jacobson found himself reminded of an earlier tome, one published in 1975 by a certain Marvin W. Cowan and entitled Mormon Claims Answered. He could find no

40 Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons (Eugene: Harvest House, 1995).
41 Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction: Triptych,” viii-x.
42 Marvin W. Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered (Salt Lake City: Cowan, 1975).
mention of Mr. Cowan nor of his book in the 1995 volume—not in its acknowledgment, nor in its notes, nor in its bibliography, nor in its indexes—but he did find some intriguing parallels. I shall reproduce these parallels without comment, for I think none is necessary:

**Cowan (1975)**

Mormons also apply Isa. 29:1–4 to the *B. of M*. Apostle LeGrand Richards says of v. 4, "Now, obviously, the only way a dead people could speak 'out of the ground' or 'low out of the dust' would be by the written word, and this people did through the *B. of M*. Truly it has a familiar spirit for it contains the words of the prophets of the God of Israel." 43

There are 15 Old Testament References to "familiar spirits" and all of them deal with witchcraft! (See Lev. 20:6,27; Deut. 18:10–12 etc.). If the LDS believe the *B. of M.* has a "familiar spirit," they are identifying it with witchcraft! 45

**Rhodes and Bodine (1995)**

The ever-popular Mormon book *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* by apostle LeGrand Richards draws the following conclusion from the Isaiah passage: "Now, obviously, the only way a dead people could speak 'out of the ground' or 'low out of the dust' would be by the written word, and this people did through the *Book of Mormon*. Truly it has a familiar spirit for it contains the words of the prophets of the God of Israel." 44

There are at least 15 Old Testament References to "familiar spirits" and all of them deal with witchcraft or spiritism (See Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; 1 Samuel 28:3–9; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3; 29:4). Therefore, when the Book of Mormon claims it has a familiar spirit, it is inadvertently claiming a relationship with the demonic. 46

---

44 Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 93.  
These events DO NOT fit Isa. 29:11–12 because the text shows: 1) This is a parable and the subject is a VISION and NOT a BOOK. 2) The VISION of the prophets of that day had become as meaningless to the people as the words of a book that was sealed. Isaiah was referring to the condition of the people at THAT TIME, and not about a BOOK of some FUTURE TIME.\(^47\)

According to Harris, the professor said the translation was correct. Anthon could have said this only if he READ it. But Isaiah said the learned man could NOT read the book because it was sealed! The only way the professor knew the plates were “sealed” was because Harris told him they were.\(^49\)

In Isaiah the BOOK went to the learned man first—then to the unlearned. But, the Mormon story has the book of gold plates delivered first to the unlearned (Smith) who copied some of the characters

The Mormon interpretation of Isaiah 29:11–12 has several problems. One is that the text shows the subject is a vision and not a book. The visions God gave to the prophets of that day had become as meaningless to the people as the words of a book that was sealed. Isaiah was referring to the condition of the people at that time and not some future era.\(^48\)

According to Martin Harris, the professor said the translation was correct. But Anthon could have said this only if he read the plates—not just some characters scribbled on a paper by Joseph Smith. Notice, however, that Isaiah said the learned man could not read it because it was sealed. The only way the professor knew the plates were “sealed” was because Harris told him they were.\(^50\)

In Isaiah 29:11–12, the book went to the learned man first then to the unlearned. But the Mormon story has the book of gold delivered first to the unlearned Smith, who copied some of the characters (allegedly from

\(^{47}\) Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 31.
\(^{48}\) Rhodes and Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 99.
\(^{49}\) Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 31.
\(^{50}\) Rhodes and Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 99–100.
with his translation on a piece of paper which was taken to the learned (Anthon). In Isa.
the same “sealed book” was taken to both the learned and the unlearned man. But
Anthon didn’t receive any book—sealed or unsealed!\(^{51}\)

In Isa. the book was delivered to the unlearned and he simply said, “I am not learned,” and made no effort to read it or translate it. BUT, Smith claimed he DID read the book, even though unlearned.\(^{53}\)

Apostle LeGrand Richards says, “Professor Anthon did not realize that he was literally fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah” \(^{52}\) (M.W. & W., p. 50). But the professor didn’t believe he was fulfilling MORMON prophecy, because in a letter to E.D. Howe, a Painesville, Ohio, newspaper editor, he relates the event as a hoax and a scheme to “cheat the farmer (Harris) of his money” (and Harris did lose his money).\(^{55}\)

Amazingly, Mormon apostle LeGrand Richards concluded that “Professor Anthon did not realize that he was literally fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.” The professor, however, certainly didn’t believe he was fulfilling Mormon prophecy. Indeed, in a letter to E.D. Howe, a Painesville, Ohio, newspaper editor, Anthon related the events as a hoax and a scheme to cheat Harris out of money. Instead of fulfilling prophecy, Anthon became somewhat of a prophet himself in that Harris actually did lose money.\(^{56}\)

---


\(^{52}\) Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 100.


\(^{54}\) Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 100.


\(^{56}\) Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 100.
It would be unfair to describe the foregoing as “A Study in CRI Behavior”—a title suggested by an egregiously *ad hominem* anti-FARMS polemic that the Rev. James White, of Phoenix, has recently been circulating on the Internet—despite the fact that both Marian Bodine and Ron Rhodes are employees of the Christian Research Institute. They are individuals and are responsible for their own actions. Close observers will note, however, that the listed parallels come from only seven or eight closely clustered pages of Rhodes and Bodine’s four-hundred-page book, and that they relate to only two consecutive pages of Mr. Cowan’s earlier work. Some might find it amusing to search for other parallels, or even to broaden the investigation to examine possible similar use, by Rhodes and Bodine, of other anti-Mormon literature. Perhaps a donor will wish to establish a prize for the student who finds the most (ahem) parallels. It seems unlikely that research of this remarkable quality is limited to the few pages of their book discussed here.

**Appendix 2: Of Jews and Nephites**

“Careful readers of the Book of Mormon will be surprised,” I passingly remarked in my review of this book’s first incarnation, “to learn [from Ankerberg and Weldon] that the Nephites were ‘Jewish.’” 57 This occasioned Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s most effective argument against me. Indeed, in a sense it is the *only* argument, properly defined, that they adduce against me. “Peterson,” they cry (on p. 480 n. 3), “declares we are wrong in claiming the alleged Nephites were Jews! (To the contrary, in the very first book of the *Book of Mormon* (1 Nephi), the Nephites are said to be Jews some 15 times).”58 They thereupon proceed to list sixteen scriptural references, eight of which come from 1 Nephi, and twelve of which have no obvious relevance to the issue under discussion.

Two of the cited passages, however, do score points against my comment. First, 2 Nephi 30:4 represents the prophet Nephi as

---

58 Emphasis in the original.
predicting that “then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews.” And Doctrine and Covenants 19:27 speaks of “the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant.”

These two passages seem fairly clear, and it looks as if I might be wrong. And I might add at this juncture that I would be perfectly happy to surrender this point to Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon. Nothing of any substance in my review rests upon the issue and, from a certain angle, their argument seems incontestable.

But is the question really so simple? No. Many passages in the Book of Mormon imply a distinction between the Nephites and the Jews.59 At 1 Nephi 3:3, for instance, Lehi explains that “Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers.” Third Nephi 29:8 distinguishes “the Jews” from “the remnant of the house of Israel,” among whom the Nephites and Lamanites are to be reckoned.60 “And it shall come to pass,” predicts 2 Nephi 29:13,

that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.

Is it possible that the people of Lehi can, at the same time, be considered both Jews and non-Jews? Yes, it is. The terminology is ambiguous. Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, which records the language in use at about the time of the appearance of the Book of Mormon, illustrates the problem. It defines the term Jew as referring to “a Hebrew or Israelite”—which is itself ambiguous, since the patriarch Abraham was a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13), but could hardly be said to be an Israelite since that word designates a descendant of any of the

59 In addition to those quoted in the text of this appendix, see 1 Nephi 1:19-20; 4:36; 10:2; 17:44; 2 Nephi 25:1-2, 5-6; Jacob 4:14-16. The distinction manifestly does not depend upon geographical distance; it is more substantial than that.

60 See 1 Nephi 13:34; 2 Nephi 28:2; Alma 46:23; 3 Nephi 20:16; Mormon 7:10; 3 Nephi 21:12, 22; Book of Mormon title page.
twelve sons of his grandson Jacob/Israel. But Webster also describes the word as “a contraction of Judas or Judah.” And, in fact, it is obvious to those who know something about Hebrew or about Semitic philology that the Hebrew word yəhūdî (“Jew,” “Judahite”), is an adjective derived from the Hebrew personal and tribal name yəhūdāh (“Judah”).

But the simple fact is that Lehi and his family were not from the tribe of Judah. On the contrary, “Lehi . . . was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren” (Alma 10:3). Even two of the passages cited by Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon as labeling the Nephites Jews actually proclaim them “descendants of Joseph.”

So, what should we make of 2 Nephi 30:4 and Doctrine and Covenants 19:27? The old Smith’s Bible Dictionary, a conservative Protestant favorite, offers some helpful insight on the use of the term Jew (or, more properly, of its Semitic equivalent) in ancient times: “This name was properly applied to a member of the kingdom of Judah after the separation of the ten tribes. The term first makes its appearance just before the captivity of the ten tribes (2 K. xvi. 6).”

Now, as any careful student of the Book of Mormon knows, Lehi—although he was descended from Manasseh, one of the tribes associated with the northern kingdom of Israel—was a resident of the southern kingdom of Judah. Accordingly, one could, by courtesy, consider him a Jew. (In much the same way, although her relationship to Goethe or Beethoven is probably distant at best, a native of Kenya who has received German citizenship is a German.) It is this geographical or political sense of the term, owing to the dominance of the tribe of Judah in the territory surrounding Jerusalem, that Nephi seems to have in mind when, at 2 Nephi 33:8, he declares that “I have charity for the Jew—I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came.”

61 See 1 Nephi 5:9, 14–15; 6:2.
63 See 1 Nephi 1:4. Presumably Lehi’s immediate ancestors were among those who fled the northern kingdom when they sensed its impending destruction.
The much more recent *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* describes Jews as, “In biblical terms, the members of the S[outhern] state of Judah ... or the postexilic people of Israel in contrast to Gentiles ... or the adherents of worship of Yahweh [i.e., Jehovah] as done at Jerusalem after the Exile.” All three of these meanings seem to be relevant to 2 Nephi 30:4 and Doctrine and Covenants 19:27. The former passage occurs in the context of a prophetic discussion in which “Jews” are distinguished from “Gentiles,” with no indication that there remains a third group not covered by the two terms. It is, manifestly, a case of the “people of Israel in contrast to Gentiles.” The Nephites would naturally feel kinship with the ethnic Jews because they were both “adherents of worship of Yahweh as done at Jerusalem.” But, even here, the ambiguity of the term surfaces. For, only a few verses later, at 2 Nephi 30:7, after a prophetic prediction that the apostate descendants of Lehi (whom he has just called “descendants of the Jews”) would eventually accept Christ, Nephi foresees the day when “the Jews which are scattered also shall begin to believe in Christ”—as if they were a distinct group. Similarly, Doctrine and Covenants 19:27 is perfectly understandable on the basis of the idea that the Lamanites are a “remnant” of the Jews because their ancestors came from Jerusalem, or Judah, where they had once worshipped Yahweh or Jehovah, and because (in a world considered as exhaustively divided between the one group and the other) they are not Gentiles.

Incidentally, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon fall victim to the ambiguous meaning of the term *Jew* when, elsewhere, they assault the Muslim holy book, the Qurʾān, on a closely related issue: “The Koran,” they exclaim, “also teaches that Abraham was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim. . . . But the Jews consider Abraham a Jew. The Christians consider Abraham a Jew. Jesus Himself considered Abraham a Jew. All the world

---

64 J. A. Sanders, in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 2:897. One should not worry too much about the idea that two of the three usages occur only in the postexilic period. We have very little evidence one way or the other about the use of the term *Jew* in preexilic times. But the discussion of this fact would go beyond my present purpose.
considers Abraham a Jew—except the Muslims.”65 Of course, if the word *Jew* is taken to refer to the religion of all the faithful believers whose story is told in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, Abraham was indubitably a Jew. But few scholars would admit that Abraham was a Jew if that signifies his being an adherent of *Judaism*, according to the strict meaning of the word. For Judaism, in a very important sense, came into existence only with the return of the Jews (meaning, mostly, Judahites) from the Babylonian captivity and with the subsequent rise to central importance of the synagogue and the rabbis. (One could plausibly argue, in fact, that Judaism came into being with the cessation of Jewish prophecy.) And, of course, Abraham is certainly not a descendant of his great-grandson, Judah. Bearing these points in mind, notice what the Arabic Qurʾān—an indisputably ancient, unquestionably Near Eastern, undeniably Semitic text—actually says: “Abraham was not a Jew [yahūdī] nor a Christian, but he was a monotheist [ḥanīf], submissive [muslim], and he was not among the idolaters.”66 In this passage, as virtually all commentators have agreed, the Qurʾān seeks to go back to a figure who antedates the divisions of the “People of the Book” into competing and apostate sects, to a man who, since he lived prior to the rise of Judaism and Christianity, before even the birth of Jacob’s son Judah and the origin of the tribe that would bear Judah’s name, can be considered the common father of the faithful. By the plain and literal meaning of the Hebrew/Arabic term yahūdī, the Qurʾān is correct. “The word ‘Jew’ is derived from Judah,” explains one very recent college-level introduction to the Old Testament. “It is technically applicable to the covenant people only following the Babylonian exile when the majority of the returnees to Palestine were from this prominent tribe.”67 Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon miss the point, however, because they cannot see beyond the vague modern usage of the word *Jew*.

In fact, the use of the term *Jew* in Latter-day Saint scripture may even serve as evidence for the dating of those canonical texts:

---

66 Qurʾān 3:67 (my translation).
By the time of Lehi, when the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel had already been gone for decades, the word *Jew* was beginning to be used to designate all those who worshipped Jehovah, for the simple reason that members of the tribe of Judah were overwhelmingly preponderant among those worshipers of Jehovah who remained. But neither its obvious original meaning nor the ancient division of Israel into twelve tribes was forgotten overnight. Lehi’s time, with the century or so that followed, was a transitional period in the use of the word. And, intriguingly, the Book of Mormon reflects this nicely. Usually it distinguishes between Jewish and non-Jewish Israelites, but occasionally, as we have seen, it does not. Eventually, though, as surviving members of other Israelite tribes were subsumed under the dominant Judahites and effectively disappeared, the word *Jew* came to be regarded as interchangeable with the word *Israelite*. Thus the Doctrine and Covenants, which is a primarily nineteenth-century text initially addressed to a nineteenth-century audience, can comfortably describe the non-Judahite Lamanites as a “remnant” of the Jews.68

Accordingly, I am willing to admit that, in the broadest sense of the word as it is currently used, Lehi and his family were Jews. But in the precise, technical sense, they were clearly not. Lehi was not a Judahite, *yahūdī*. He and his party had already left Jerusalem before the exile began. It was the precise, technical sense that I had in mind. The problem here arises because I was using the term *Jew* in its clearly defined, original, ancient meaning, while my critics understand it only in the less precise modern way. Nonetheless, if Ankerberg and Weldon wish to claim a victory here, they are welcome to it.

Appendix 3: Disarmed by Degrees

Although they themselves insist that their academic background qualifies them to critique the faith of the Latter-day Saints, it is very difficult to figure out what degrees Dr. Ankerberg and

---

68 I am indebted to Professor William J. Hamblin for this interesting suggestion.
Dr. Dr. Weldon have and what sort of education they have received.

As an example, take the back cover of *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, which describes John Ankerberg as holding “master’s degrees in divinity and church history and the philosophy of Christian thought, and a doctorate degree from Luther Rice Seminary.” Does this mean that he has two master’s degrees, or three? On page 14, we are told that “John Ankerberg has two graduate degrees in Christian History and the History of Christian Thought.” Do these two degrees include his doctorate? If so, what happened to the other master’s degree, or to the other two master’s degrees? If his doctorate is *not* included, why not? (A 1991 Ankerberg and Weldon publication speaks of an indeterminate number of “masters degrees” possessed by Mr. Ankerberg, but mentions no doctorate.)

And is “the philosophy of Christian thought” the same subject as “the History of Christian Thought”? Do any of John Ankerberg’s diplomas represent correspondence degrees? A letter sent to me on 10 April 1996 by Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary claims that it is “the world’s leader in non-traditional, practical, conservative theological education.” A brochure sent on the same day by Luther Rice Seminary and Bible College—note, incidentally, the variation in the school’s name—explains that “All LRS degree programs are offered through Home Study or Distance Education.” But do graduate degrees earned via correspondence represent the same quality of training as those attained through close work with graduate faculty advisors and research in graduate libraries? (Every reputable graduate program that I am aware of requires a minimum of one year, and usually two years, in residence, and practical reality almost always demands more than the stipulated minimum.)

Furthermore, a search of the *Comprehensive Dissertation Index* in the Brigham Young University library located no entry for John Ankerberg, and a scan of the hundreds of degree-granting institutions listed as submitting reports of dissertations to the *Index* (including such evangelical Protestant institutions as 69 Ankerberg and Weldon, *The Facts on Islam*, back cover.

70 Luther Rice’s slogan, as given in the brochure, is “The World Is Our Campus.”
Dallas Theological Seminary and Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary) detected no reference to Luther Rice Seminary. Did he not write a dissertation? (Academic doctoral programs typically require dissertations.) Or is Luther Rice not covered by the Comprehensive Dissertation Index? Or both? Finally, a huge standard reference work on graduate and professional degree programs that I consulted, although containing information on more than 1500 degree-granting institutions (including many seminaries, representing all brands of Christianity), apparently fails to mention Luther Rice.71

Careful readers are bound to find this all a tad puzzling, and would no doubt appreciate further information so that they can be properly assured of Ankerberg’s academic qualifications to speak for his type of Protestantism against the Latter-day Saints. There is, of course, nothing necessarily wrong with such institutions as Luther Rice and the people who attend them. To the extent that the programs they offer enhance the ability of Protestant clergy and laypersons to serve other people, and to serve the Lord, they are certainly to be welcomed. They fill a niche, and they serve a

71 See Peterson’s Graduate and Professional Programs: An Overview 1996 (Princeton: Peterson’s, 1996). During a 15 April 1996 telephone conversation with me, an official at Princeton Theological Seminary was similarly unable to find any mention of Luther Rice in the reference works available to her. She had not heard of the school. Brown and Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, 4:111, says that, at least as recently as 1995, Luther Rice Seminary was unaccredited. On the other hand, the “Distance Education Prospectus” of Pacific College and Pacific College of Graduate Studies, a school (of sorts) that I shall introduce below, calls it “an accredited American institution.” A 10 April 1996 letter to me from Dennis Dieringer, director of admissions at Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary, says that the Seminary is “accredited by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools,” which is “recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.” But this does not seem to match the accreditation process for seminaries and divinity schools as it was outlined to me by an official of Denver’s Iliff School of Theology on 16 April 1996. She told me that such institutions are typically accredited by the same regional bodies that certify mainstream universities and colleges, followed by the added scrutiny of an organization called the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Some fundamentalist schools, she continued, claim accreditation from organizations that are, themselves, not properly authorized to give it. The General Catalog just published by Luther Rice admits that the school “is not accredited by a regional accrediting association.” See The Catalog of Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary, 1996–1998 (Lithonia, Ga.: Luther Rice Seminary, n.d), 11.
purpose. But it is not obvious that the kind of "practical" training they supply qualifies their students as academic authorities on theology—let alone on the faith of the Latter-day Saints.

In the case of John Weldon, I fear that the situation is more complicated still. The back cover of *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* assures us that he has "master's degrees in divinity and Christian apologetics, and a doctorate in comparative religion." But it would be nice to know where he received these degrees. Furthermore, are the "master's degrees in divinity and Christian apologetics" mentioned on the back cover the same as the "two master's degrees in biblical studies" mentioned on page 14, or are they in addition to those? And does he really have only one doctorate? *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* says on page 14 that John Weldon "has a Ph.D. in comparative religion, including a second doctorate specializing in cultic theology." Why was this second doctorate not mentioned on the back cover? It was also omitted on the back cover of Ankerberg and Weldon's 1991 attack on Islam, which mentions for him only "a doctorate in comparative religion, with an emphasis on Eastern religions." Where did he obtain this second doctorate? What kind of a field is "cultic theology" anyway, and what kind of school teaches it? (By Ankerberg and Weldon's standards, I suppose Brigham Young University does!) And what does it mean for one doctoral degree to "include" another? In all my experience in academic circles, I have never heard of any such thing. Nor has anybody with whom I have spoken about it. (Is it some sort of quantity discount? "Buy one and get the second diploma free"?)

A published 1985 reference to Mr. Weldon reported that he had received his B.A. (with honors) from San Diego State University, following that with an M.A. from the Pacific College of Graduate Studies, in Melbourne, Australia. By 1987, a biographical sketch inside one of his books identified him as "John Weldon, M.A., M.Div." Between 1987 and the 1992 publication of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*,

73 Hal May, ed., *Contemporary Authors*, vol. 113 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1985), 509.
however, Mr. Weldon was apparently quite busy acquiring yet more advanced degrees, including two doctorates. That book also
described him as "a graduate of law school, where he majored in
the subject of evaluating evidence for the true [sic] claims of
Christianity"—a somewhat unusual legal specialty, as I noted ear-
lier—although *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* now says that he is
"a graduate of Simon Greenleaf University, where he majored in
the subject of evaluating evidence for the truth claims of Christi-
anity" (p. 14, emphasis added). All of this continues to be per-
plexing. As I reported in my 1993 review, a search of the *Com-
prehensive Dissertation Index* turned up no mention of Mr.
Weldon, which appeared to indicate that his doctorates were
earned at the kind of institution that either (a) does not require a
dissertation or (b) is not represented in the *Comprehensive Dis-
sertation Index*. (Or, alternatively, that his dissertations were sub-
mitted prior to 1861.)

Although Mr. Weldon, so far as I am able to determine, never
names the school or schools from which he obtained his doctor-
ate(s), he has given us the valuable clue that his Ph.D. comes from
Australia (p. 480 n. 3). That fact, coupled with the information,
mentioned above, that he received an M.A. from the Pacific Col-
lege of Graduate Studies in Melbourne, Australia, would lead one
to suspect that it is this same institution from which he secured at
least one of his doctoral degrees. With that in mind, I shall sum-
marize something of what I have learned about that school.76

The Pacific College of Graduate Studies is a fundamentalist
Protestant operation. For instance, its published "Doctrinal State-
ment" affirms the inerrancy and finality of the 66 books of the

75 My colleague Dr. William Hamblin and I visited Simon Greenleaf
University in southern California during late November 1989. It was an enlight-
ening experience, one that I shall someday describe in print.
76 My information comes from Dennis R. Curyer, of the greater
Melbourne area, to whom I am grateful for his assistance, as well as from a 25
March 1996 telephone call to the Pacific College of Graduate Studies made by my
colleague William Hamblin. I shall be quoting, too, from the January 1996 edi-
tion of the "Distance Education Prospectus" of Pacific College and Pacific
College of Graduate Studies. (Incidentally, Mr. Curyer, a Latter-day Saint student
at the University of Melbourne, when asked via telephone on 26 March 1996
what he knew about the Pacific College of Graduate Studies, replied that, until
then, he had never heard of it.)
Protestant biblical canon and requires that its students' work agree with a conservative Protestant view of such subjects as the Trinity. The first point of its six-item statement of "Academic Philosophy" refers to the ability of "the Christian teacher . . . to examine critically and to confront effectively the views of opponents of Christianity." Its courses in archaeology survey the "archaeological evidence" not so much to gain a thorough understanding of the state of the discipline but in order to show "how it supports the historical veracity of the Bible." And its course on "Logical Fallacies," Philosophy 502, is designed to "investigate" the alleged fallacies that are "used against the Bible and Christian belief."

Established in the area of greater Melbourne in 1980, the Pacific College of Graduate Studies seems to have no campus, and apparently offers degrees only by correspondence. A telephone conversation with a worker at the College indicated that, as of late March 1996, the College had just moved, and that matters there were, consequently, in something of a state of chaos. (The situation was rendered more difficult, the worker said, by the fact that, in order to keep overhead costs low, the College employs minimal staff.) Only the College's dean has e-mail. When asked for a Fax number, the worker replied that the College owns just one Fax machine, which shares the College's telephone number. And, according to the official letter sent out to prospective students (my copy is dated 26 March 1996), all telephone calls that come in to that College number after business hours on Monday through Thursday evenings are automatically routed to the home of the "Principal" of the College. "When it is time for the student to graduate," says the College's xeroxed "Distance Education Prospectus," "a ceremony is organised at the student's home church or at any other location that is relevant to the student, his family and community. The ceremony takes about ten minutes and full academic dress (where appropriate) is usually required."

According to the materials it sends out to inquirers, the Pacific College of Graduate Studies has close but not clearly defined links with (of all places!) Luther Rice Seminary. I would judge, too, that there is some unease at the College about its academic reputation, because among these materials is a two-page collection of endorsements from fundamentalist Protestants affili-
ated with a pair of conservative seminaries (one “a world class, accredited institution,” and the other “an accredited American institution”) and a number of other organizations. A certain Rev. Dr. Bruce Dipple is quoted as saying that the College’s “degrees are of a high standard and are worthy of the endorsement of any accrediting body,” which may, I suspect, be taken as a tacit admission that, in reality, they have not actually been accredited. (If they had, surely mention of that fact would have been more impressive than Rev. Dr. Dipple’s compliments.)

Graduate students enrolled with the Pacific College of Graduate Studies may concentrate in fields such as “Christian Counseling,” “Pastoral Care,” “Pastoral Ministry,” and, my own favorite, “Apologetics.” Among the courses students may take toward the latter major are Cults 501 (“Introduction to Cults”), Cults 502 (“The Theology of Cults”), and Cults 506, which covers “Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of the [sic] Latter Day [sic] Saints).” The College offers “three professional doctoral degrees by distance education,” which include “Doctor of Biblical Studies,” “Doctor of Christian Education,” and “Doctor of Ministry.” The faculty of the College appears to consist of 24 people, including the President, the Principal, and two deans. These personnel are not, it would seem, necessarily resident in Australia. After all, one of the listed “tutors and supervisors” is none other than “Dr. John Weldon” himself, who is identified as a “senior researcher for ‘The John Ankerberg Show,’” which is based in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

In the “Distance Education Prospectus” of Pacific College and Pacific College of Graduate Studies, John Weldon’s degrees are listed as “M.Div.—Luther Rice Sem., DMin [sic]—Luther Rice Sem., Ph.D.” So here we find identified the two doctorates that are occasionally ascribed to him. Unfortunately, though, there is no mention of a law degree, nor of an M.A. Nor, once again, are we told where he obtained his Ph.D. I have hypothesized, because of his statement that it comes from Australia and because of his intimate (though geographically distant) connection with the Pacific College of Graduate Studies, that it was from this rather obscure Melbourne correspondence school that he received it. But the enigma remains thus far unresolvable. For the College’s three listed doctoral degrees—“Doctor of Biblical Studies,” “Doctor
of Christian Education,” and “Doctor of Ministry”—do not appear to include the degree of “Ph.D.”

Ankerberg and Weldon are very upset with me because, they say, I assert that “Dr. Weldon’s Ph.D. is probably from a degree mill.” (Note the singular, incidentally, with no word of a second doctorate. I actually declared myself mystified by both of his doctoral degrees.) Such an accusation, they write, made simply because his doctorate “is not listed in Comprehensive Dissertation Index[,] is unfounded. Australian institutions do not report their dissertations to U.S. Indices” (p. 480 n. 3). But, in fact, a cursory survey of the many, many degree-granting schools listed in the Index found institutions not only in North America but in the United Kingdom, on the European continent, in Asia, and, yes, in Australia. In fact, I located listings from two schools in Melbourne itself, and there may be more. Unfortunately, though, the Pacific College of Graduate Studies was not among them. What is more, as I have just noted, the catalog distributed by the Pacific College of Graduate Studies identifies one of Weldon’s two doctorates, his Doctor of Ministry degree (D.Min.), as coming not from a school in Australia but from a seminary in the United States of America. From Luther Rice Seminary, to be precise.77 So, as far as that particular Weldon doctorate is concerned, the judgment seems to be sustained that it comes from an institution that either (a) does not require a dissertation or (b) is not represented in the Comprehensive Dissertation Index. (Or, alternatively, that Weldon submitted his dissertation prior to 1861.) It would have been interesting to know, if he wrote one, what his dissertation was about.

What is more, it is not at all clear how a D.Min. degree would qualify Weldon to research and write on either “comparative religions” or “cultic theology.” As Professor James M. Robinson, the renowned director of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at the Claremont Graduate School, has observed, “Doctor of Ministry is the name of a degree aimed at practical church work such as is earned by a pastor. It is not the scholarly degree (Ph.D. or Th.D.).” And Frederick Von Bush, of California’s conservative Fuller Theological Seminary, concurs, explaining that the Doctor

77 The introductory brochure distributed by Luther Rice Seminary lists fourteen “prominent Christian leaders” among their graduates. I recognized four of the names, including John Weldon and John Ankerberg.
of Ministry degree, even when it is legitimately earned from a legitimate institution, is "professional, not academic." For that matter, the 1996–1998 General Catalog published by Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary goes out of its way to stress that several of its original leaders had "earned an academic doctorate"—i.e., either a Th.D. or a Ph.D.—in implicit contrast to the D.Min., which, although many of the early Seminary leaders seem to have held that degree, is never so described.

Actually, of course, I never said that Weldon's claimed doctorates were "from a degree mill" (see Proverbs 28:1). But I do admit to being puzzled about this issue, and the repeated tendency of anti-Mormon agitators to claim phony degrees does, I think, give me some grounds for justifiable suspicion. Our authors could end my perplexity (and, no doubt, that of at least some

78 Letters of James M. Robinson (23 March 1989) and Frederick Von Bush (19 May 1989) to Robert L. Brown, reproduced in Brown and Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, 4:118, 120.
79 The Catalog of Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary, 1996–1998, 1–2, emphasis added.
80 I will not include here one of the earliest (and perhaps the greatest) of all anti-Mormons, the excommunicated immoralist Doctor Philastus Hurlbut. For he came by his "Doctor" honestly: It was his given first name. (His parents apparently named him "Doctor" because, as a seventh son, he was folklorically expected to have miraculous powers.) But see Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive (Mesa: Brownsworth, 1981–), 1:1–43 (on "Dr." Dee Jay Nelson); 2:75–115, 165–214. (on "Dr." Walter Martin and "Dr." Dee Jay Nelson); 3:29–66 (on "Dr." Walter Martin); 4:71–145 (on "Dr." Richard Fales, "Dr." Charles Crane, and "Dr." John L. Smith). A similar aroma seems to emanate from "Dr. Howard Davis," who was prominently involved with "Dr." Martin in an effort, during the late 1970s, to resurrect the so-called "Spalding theory" of the origins of the Book of Mormon. In an article on the case, the Los Angeles Times (30 June 1977) introduced "Howard A. Davis, 33, who holds a doctor of theology degree from a California Bible college," as "an unemployed lab technician." I am told by a credible source that one widely published critic of the Church, not an evangelical, derives his title of Doctor from his background as an herbal medicine salesman. (His customers call him Doc.) I have said nothing of bogus genealogies, an anti-Mormon ploy used by "Dr." Martin and his associate Wayne Cowdrey, on which volumes 2 and 3 of the Browns' ongoing work have some truly delicious information. Walter Martin was the founder of the Christian Research Institute (CRI), which, since his death, has been led by Ed Decker's ardent fan Hank Hanegraaff, and was the host of CRI's national radio call-in show, The Bible Answer Man.
other readers) by simply telling us clearly when and where and in what discipline they earned their degrees.\textsuperscript{81} (They are the people who raised the issue of their credentials in the first place.) As it is, Ankerberg and Weldon advise us to reject Joseph Smith’s accounts of his First Vision because one narrative of the event mentions the Son and another mentions the Father and the Son. They call this a “contradiction” (see pp. 268–72.) So what are we to say of John Ankerberg, who sometimes claims a doctorate and sometimes does not, or of John Weldon, who sometimes mentions one doctorate and sometimes two?\textsuperscript{82} What are we to make of their vagueness on the subject, which persists in Behind the Mask of Mormonism despite my criticisms and despite their own obvious touchiness about it? Why don’t they just settle the matter?

\textsuperscript{81} I shall begin this new era of full disclosure by revealing that I was awarded a Ph.D.— alas, I have only one—in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures (with an emphasis in Arabic and Persian) at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1990, following my submission of a dissertation entitled “Cosmogony and the Ten Separated Intellects in the Rāḥat al-'Aql of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī.” I had previously earned a B.A. in classical Greek, with a minor in philosophy, from Brigham Young University in 1977, which I followed with about four and a half years in the Middle East studying in Jerusalem (on formative Judaism and Christianity) and at the American University in Cairo (on Arabic language and literature, and medieval Islam).

\textsuperscript{82} Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsot,” 14 n. 23.

Reviewed by Blake T. Ostler

Recently, Mellen Press published a book by Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish entitled The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis. The authors claim that their book is the first and only philosophical critique by non-Mormons of the unique Mormon concept of God. They are, however, nearly a century too late to legitimately claim this august distinction. The honor goes to the Reverend Vander Donckt, who ably critiqued the Mormon concept of God in his debate with B. H. Roberts. Beckwith and Parrish’s work, however, makes several new claims that are worthy of response.

Beckwith and Parrish’s work is divided into five separate sections. The first section outlines “the classical concept of God.” The second purports to define “Mormon Finitistic Theism.” The third presents an argument against Mormon cosmology based upon the supposed impossibility of an actual infinite. The fourth section critiques the argument of David L. Paulsen, professor of philosophy at Brigham Young University, that the teleological argument better supports the Mormon view of a God who is in some respects conditioned, than the absolute of classical theology. The last section argues that the classical concept of God accounts for the biblical data better than does the Mormon concept they have outlined.

Unfortunately, the authors’ attempt to discuss both the classical concept of God and Mormon views suffers from vagueness. The concept of God promulgated by Thomas Aquinas, for example, which is usually associated with a dominant view in scholastic theology, is very different from that elucidated by later

---

theologians Luis de Molina and Suarez. Arguments of process theologians have been justly criticized for failing to recognize the distinction between what we may call “absolute sovereignty” theologians and “limited sovereignty” theologians. The absolute sovereignty theologians like Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Luther emphasize God’s power and knowledge at the expense of free will, while limited sovereignty theologians like Luis de Molina, James Arminius, and Alvin Plantinga emphasize human free will at the expense of God’s power. The authors constantly equivocate between these two major views. As a result, their analysis is confusing and misses many subtle distinctions which ought to be observed. Indeed, these distinctions are precisely the ones required in order to make sense of the Mormon position.2

1. God’s Perfection

The authors begin by contrasting their view of the Mormon concept of God with the God of “classical theism.” There is a very basic difference between the Mormon view of perfection and the “classical” view. The “classical” tradition views perfection as static and absolute, an upper limit beyond which it is impossible to progress. From this view of perfection it follows that God is without any parts (metaphysically simple), outside of time (timeless), absolutely unchanging in any respect (immutable), untouched by anything that occurs in the world (impassable), and without any material body (incorporeal). However, in Mormonism, perfection

2 It also bears noting that many of the arguments that they offer against a particular “Mormon” concept of God are basically a rehash of arguments presented against process thought in Process Theology, ed. Ronald Nash (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987). Process theology, very briefly, views God as a dynamic, self-surpassing being rather than a static absolute. The authors’ arguments against the Mormon view of a universe without temporal beginning are merely warmed-over versions of arguments presented in William Lane Craig’s “Creation ex nihilo” in that collection (ibid., 145-73), although Craig’s presentation is much more lucid. The argument attempting to show the compatibility of foreknowledge and free will is merely a poor revision of Craig’s “Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents” found in the same work (ibid., 95-115). The authors have simply tailored such arguments to particular Mormon beliefs. What is interesting is that process thought and Mormonism are so similar in some respects that arguments against one often turn out to be arguments against the other.
is a dynamic notion that includes interpersonal involvement with an ever-changing world. At any given moment, God is the greatest possible being, but is self-surpassing in each new moment of reality. Whereas the classical God is the creator and sustainer of the world ex nihilo (or out of nothing), the Mormon God organizes a chaos of eternally existing mass and energy into a cosmos of order.

The authors argue that criticisms of the classical concepts of perfection by Mormon authors are not successful. One such argument that Beckwith and Parrish wrestle with is whether God is absolutely self-sufficient. Mormons have indeed argued that a God who is absolutely a se (or self-sufficient), in the sense that God logically cannot depend on anything else for any of his intrinsic or real properties, raises certain problems.

In particular, Aristotle observed that God, conceived as the Unmoved Mover, would contemplate only his self-perfection, because to contemplate anything less would be an imperfection. Such a view may be fine for Greek metaphysics, but it will hardly do for the Christian notion that God is love—unless this scriptural assertion is interpreted to mean that God is narcissistic self-love rather than other-loving. Further, if God is perfect and needs nothing, what possible reason could he have for creating a less-than-perfect world? He certainly doesn’t need our praise (much less our blasphemy) and the creation of such a world adds nothing to God’s perfection. In principle, a purely actual God who has accomplished everything possible could not have anything left to accomplish. Because the classical God is simply the apex of all value possible, any creation could only diminish the overall value of the existing universe.

I presented a deductive argument in an article entitled “The Mormon Concept of God,” which concluded that if God possesses aseity in this sense, then in principle there cannot be any sufficient reason for God to create anything. The authors

3 Unless speaking of the individual and separate divine persons, I will use the term God to refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost united as one God or “Godhead.”

4 In Blake T. Oståler, “The Mormon Concept of God,” Dialogue 17/2 (1984): 90. More perspicuously, the argument is that the lack of any sufficient reason external to God for God to create anything and any reason internal to God...
respond that I have misunderstood the notion of self-sufficiency on which the argument rests. They claim that the "term self-sufficient, when describing the classical God, simply means that God is not dependent on anything else for his being God . . . . It follows only that God cannot perform an act which fulfills a lack in his nature (precisely because he lacks nothing), not that He cannot perform any act for which He has sufficient reason to perform" (p. 9, emphasis added).

However, I believe that it is the authors who misunderstand the notion of ascity. For Thomists and other medieval theologians, self-sufficiency means much more than merely that God's status as God does not depend on anything. Indeed, the very notion of an actus purus upon which Aquinas premised his entire theology entails that God cannot be related to or depend upon anything for any intrinsic property. There is no potentiality in God to be other than what he just timeless is. God would be exactly the same in all respects even if the world never existed. He would be just as happy, just as perfect, just as pleased if the entire world never existed—or even if it existed but every person created engaged in murder and rape throughout their lives. Since nothing acts upon God on this view, God's being in all respects is exactly the same whether the world exists or not. It follows that there is no positive reason for God to create such a world since it literally makes no difference to him—or it.

would result in a certain necessity of nature which renders God unfree as to whether to create. The argument I presented is as follows:

1. If God possesses ascity and exists, then he is not dependent on anything nor lacking in any conceivable manner (i.e., God is self-sufficient).
2. A self-sufficient being cannot manifest a need nor be enhanced by any action (from 1).
3. Every positive action requires an explanation sufficient to account for it (criteria of sufficient reason).
4. Creation of the cosmos is a positive action.
5. A self-sufficient being could not manifest a reason sufficient to explain why it preferred existence of the cosmos to its nonexistence (1, 2).
6. Hence, God did not create the cosmos (3, 4, 5).

The authors fail to understand the difference between their view and the Thomist view of God. They have assumed a single "classical" concept of God identical to the evangelical view they present, and that certainly is not the case. For example, the authors implicitly reject the Thomist view of aseity. Instead, they accept the view that some of God's intrinsic properties are dependent upon what humans do, since they assert that God's "relational knowledge" is different depending on what happens in the world. Moreover, they assert that what we do matters to God (p. 17). Presumably, according to this view God has a good reason to create, i.e., it makes him happier and it matters to him that we exist. But then, God depends on the world for his knowledge and internal emotions. Thus this God is not self-sufficient in his intrinsic being. Their view is therefore more moderate than the Thomist view that I criticized. I would concede that my criticism does not apply to the concept of God fashioned by the authors. However, this concession does not diminish the force of the argument against the Thomist view of God.

The authors face problems of internal consistency at this point because they adopt the Thomist argument that, in all respects, "God is the best, always has been the best, and always will be the best" (p. 14). Aside from the fact that best is a term of comparison and God can't be compared to anything according to their view, I think the authors would have to admit that God is better or happier as a result of creation. He is happier if we accept him than if we reject him. He may not be any more or any less God, but he is in some respect better if the world exists. Thus God is dependent on the world for at least some of his intrinsic properties (i.e., his emotional response and knowledge of which possible things are actual) and can be better depending on how contingent things turn out which are not fully up to him.

2. God's Power

The authors go on to argue that the classical God is unlimited in power, whereas the Mormon God has "limited power" (pp. 10–11, 40–41). Describing the Mormon deity as merely "limited in power" is clearly inadequate because it fails to distinguish God from other things limited in power such as humans and
ants. Rather, the Mormon deity should be described as having “maximal power,” that is, all the power it is (consistently) possible for one being to have among other free beings. The difference between classical and Mormon views is not that God has all power possible; rather, the difference lies in what limits God’s power. The authors assume that God is not limited by any nonlogical conditions, whereas the Mormon deity must contend with uncreated matter and intelligences. They argue that the Mormon God has less power than is possible and thus is not really all-powerful. However, they fail to provide a consistent notion of omnipotence against which the Mormon claim can be compared.

The authors argue that God can do anything, provided that (1) doing it is logically possible and (2) doing it is consistent with God’s basic attributes. However, even the authors cannot consistently adopt this notion of omnipotence. For example, God cannot bring about my free acts, although the fact that I bring about my free acts is (1) logically possible and (2) consistent with God’s attributes. Thus the authors’ notion of omnipotence is not adequate.

Problematically, Beckwith and Parrish also accept the view that God has middle knowledge or knowledge not only of what will happen, but also what would happen in any possible circumstance even if that circumstance never occurs (p. 16). It is well established that middle knowledge entails that God is limited by contingent states of affairs that he cannot fully control. Thus if it is true that if Socrates were created in circumstances of the actual world, then Socrates will freely drink hemlock to end his life, then it follows that God cannot bring about the contingent state of affairs of Socrates’ existing in the actual world, but Socrates freely refrains from drinking hemlock. Since every free act open to humans entails a contingent state of affairs which God cannot bring about, it follows that God is rather severely limited by mere possibilities. It thus seems ironic for the authors to chide Mormonism for limiting God’s power by eternal actualities when they must limit God’s power by mere possibilities.

Indeed, given God’s middle knowledge, God is subject to a kind of “fate,” as Jonathan Edwards pointed out long ago. Since
God has no control over which "counterfactuals of freedom"⁶ are true, it follows that God isn't fully in charge of things. Sovereignty and power are necessarily shared among many agents and hence God's own sovereignty and power are limited by the acts of other free agents whom God cannot control. Although Mormonism has long held that power is necessarily shared, such a view is objectionable to the authors since they demand a God with more control and more power because they believe that God is limited only by logic and not by eternally coexisting realities. Yet to be consistent they must limit God's power in this way.

Nevertheless, the authors could have argued that the actualization of such "counterfactuals of freedom" is merely the result of God's decision to create free beings out of nothing. God could have the power they describe if he had decided to refrain from creating free beings. Thus they may claim that God has more power in their view than the Mormon deity, who is necessarily limited by other free beings, because in their view God is only contingently limited by his own decisions.

However, this argument is not successful because it fails to consider the logic of God as a being existing in an actual world. For example, it seems clear that God cannot now bring it about that Lincoln is not shot in 1865, though no doubt at one time God could have prevented it from occurring. Thus what has been actual limits God's power. It seems rather academic to argue that God can do anything logically possible since God is now faced with a world containing free creatures who limit his options. Further, suppose that the world just happens to have always existed of factual necessity. Since God cannot change the past, it follows that God could not change this eternally past fact about the world. Thus it is logically possible that God is limited by the fact that the world has always existed. But if that is true, then it is logically possible that God is conditioned by preexisting actualities even if God has maximal power—or all the power it is consistently possible to

---

⁶ A counterfactual of freedom is a proposition which describes what a person would freely do if placed in any particular circumstances. A good deal of doubt has been expressed as to the existence of any true counterfactuals of freedom. Though if there are no such true counterfactuals God cannot know them, pace Beckwith and Parrish. See William Hasker, God, Time and Knowledge (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), ch. 2.
have given what has obtained in the past. In any case, the authors fail to address these other conditions on divine power which have been well documented in the literature of the philosophy of religion. Given these limitations, the Mormon view of God’s maximal power is logically consistent and the authors’ view is not.

3. God’s Knowledge

The authors then move on to define God’s omniscience as knowledge of all true propositions, including propositions about future free acts of humans (called by philosophers “future contingent propositions”). They contrast this view with the notion held by some Mormons that God does not know future free acts. However, Beckwith and Parrish mislead readers when they argue that the view that God does not know future free acts (or “future contingent propositions”) is somehow the Mormon view and their view is the biblical view accepted by right-thinking evangelicals (p. 127 n. 22). An increasing number of Christian theists in both the Catholic and Protestant camps accept an “open” view of God—the view that God changes in response to the world and that the future is an open realm of as yet undecided possibilities.

---

7 See for example, George I. Mavrodes, “Defining Omnipotence,” Philosophical Studies 32 (1977): 191-202; Thomas P. Flint and Alfred Freddoso, “Maximal Power,” in Existence and the Nature of God, ed. Alfred Freddoso (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1983), 81-113; Edward R. Wierenga, The Nature of God (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 28-29. God’s temporally indexed, maximal power can be defined as follows: An agent A is maximally powerful at a time t if A is able unilaterally to bring about any state of affairs SA such that: (a) SA does not entail that “A does not bring about SA at t”; and (b) SA is compossible with all events that precede t in time in the actual world up to t.

Recently, five moderate evangelicals authored a book wherein they argue that the view (held by Beckwith and Parrish) that God is timeless, immutable, and has absolute foreknowledge worships Neoplatonism rather than the biblical God.9

Mormonism, Free Will, and Foreknowledge

The historical tension between foreknowledge and free will is not an issue of Mormon theism vs. evangelical theism as Beckwith and Parrish paint it; rather, it is an issue confronting theists generally. James Faulconer comes as close as anyone to making an accurate statement of the Mormon position regarding God’s foreknowledge:

Historically, most Latter-day Saints have taken the first general position: everything is foreseen and freedom remains. Some have taken the second, that God’s foreknowledge is not absolute. The third alternative, that human freedom is illusory, is incompatible with LDS belief in genuine free agency and responsibility.10

Thus it remains an open question in Mormonism whether foreknowledge and free agency are compatible.11 I have argued that they are not compatible. The Mormon view that God is involved in “eternal progression” and that a genuine risk is

---

Sanders. William Hasker, and David Basinger in their contributions in The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994).

9 Pinnock et al., The Openness of God.


11 However, it is the position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that the propositions “There will [at some time] be nothing more to be learned [by God]” and that “the Father and the Son do not progress in knowledge and wisdom because they already know all things past, present and to come” are “false doctrine.” The First Presidency under Brigham Young declared these propositions false in a First Presidency statement printed in the Millennial Star 27 (21 October 1865): 660; and Messages of the First Presidency, ed. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookeraft, 1965–75), 2:234.
associated with salvation due to free will (in opposition to Satan's plan, which would have removed all risks) is more consistent with the open view of God. The strong commitment to free agency in Mormon thought is of course basic because it is grounded in Lehi's statement in the Book of Mormon that "it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). But views about the incompatibility of such free agency and God's foreknowledge should not be labeled "the Mormon view."

The Incompatibility of Free Will and Foreknowledge

The authors unsuccessfully attempt to defend their view against the argument that if God infallibly foreknows the future, then humans cannot be free. They present a supposed argument purporting to show that foreknowledge is incompatible with free will and then they easily and decisively defeat it (pp. 12-13). Now, I am quite satisfied that the authors have shown that the argument that they present is simply (and obviously) invalid. The argument as presented commits the obvious modal fallacy that "if x will definitely occur, then x will occur necessarily." However, no one to my knowledge has ever presented the flawed argument which they allege represents the argument given by "some Mormon thinkers." What is worse, they appear to attribute this badly flawed argument to me (pp. 12-13)! But I have never presented such an argument and I do not relish having such a ridiculous argument attributed to me. The argument they present thus represents a straw man.14

12 The (badly) flawed argument presented by Beckwith and Parrish is as follows:
1. God's knowledge of the future is always true.
2. Therefore, God knows what will definitely happen.
3. 'Pat will mow the law on Tuesday' is part of this definite future.
4. Free will is the ability to do otherwise.
5. Therefore, 'Pat will mow his law on Tuesday' could not be otherwise.
6. Therefore, God's omniscience eliminates human free will" (p. 12).
13 More accurately, this argument commits the fallacy of inferring the necessity of the consequent from the necessity of the consequence; also known as Sleigh's Fallacy.
14 It is amazing that the authors are ignorant of the logical structure of the incompatibility argument because it is probably the most discussed issue in the philosophy of religion in the past thirty years. Literally hundreds of articles and
The modern argument showing that free will is not compatible with foreknowledge is based on the fixity of the past or, in other words, the principle that no person can have power to do anything which entails that God has not always believed what God has in fact always believed. Suppose that God has always believed that I will rob a 7-Eleven at a certain time t. My refraining from robbing the 7-Eleven at time t certainly entails that God has not always believed that I will rob at t. Because God has always believed that I will rob the 7-Eleven at t, I cannot have the power to refrain from robbing, since this power would entail power to change God’s past beliefs. No person has the power to alter the past. Yet to be free with respect to whether I rob, I must have power to refrain from robbing the 7-Eleven at t. It follows that either God does not have foreknowledge or I am not free.15

15 The valid, and I believe sound, argument to show that foreknowledge is incompatible with free will is as follows:

1. It has always been true that I will sin tomorrow. (Assumption: Omnipresence of Truth).
2. It is impossible that God should hold a false belief or fail to know any truth (Assumption: Infallible Foreknowledge).
3. God has always believed that I will sin tomorrow (from 1 and 2).
4. If God has always believed a certain thing, then it is not in anyone’s power to do anything which entails that God has not always believed that thing (Assumption: Fixed Past).
5. It is not in my power to do anything that entails that God has not always believed that I will sin tomorrow (from 3 and 4).
6. That I refrain from sinning tomorrow entails that God has not always believed that I will sin tomorrow (necessary truth and from 2; Principle of Transfer of Powerlessness).
7. Therefore, it is not in my power to refrain from sinning tomorrow (from 5 and 6).
8. If I act freely when I sin tomorrow, then I also have it within my power to refrain from sinning (assumption libertarian free will).
9. Therefore, I do not act freely when I sin tomorrow (from 7 and 8).

For an argument using a similar logical structure, see Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge*, 66–69.
Nothing the authors say responds to this valid argument. Since they do not consider this argument, they have not successfully defended the "classical" view of God against this objection.16

Are Scriptures Incompatible with the Open View?

The authors also argue that the scriptures are incompatible with the view that God does not infallibly foreknow all free acts of humans (pp. 119–20). Citing Deuteronomy 18:22, the authors argue that if any prediction made by a prophet could possibly not come to pass, then "in some possible world Yahweh does not speak for Yahweh. Hence only if God has absolute foreknowledge of the future does Deuteronomy 18:22 make sense."17 This argument fails both logically and in terms of biblical exegesis. As Richard Rice noted of a similar argument presented by Beckwith:

Beckwith ignores the texture and complexity of biblical prophecy. He says nothing about conditional prophecy, and his rigid standard of prophetic authenticity would clearly discredit Jonah, in view of the unfulfilled predictions he made.18

How then do those who believe God's foreknowledge is limited explain biblical prophecy and faith in God's certain triumph over evil? God can ensure triumph over evil though the future is not absolutely foreknown because he is like a master chess player.

---

16 In addition, the authors adopt a view of God's knowledge which they cannot consistently assert. If God knows all true propositions about the infinite future, then God has knowledge of a completed and actual infinite. However, Beckwith and Parrish assert that it is logically impossible either for an actual infinite to exist or to complete an actual infinite (ch. 3). It follows that their view of God's foreknowledge is inconsistent with their view that an actual infinite is logically impossible. This position is persuasively argued by William Flanhead, "The Symmetry of the Past and the Future in the Kalam Cosmological Argument," and Robert Prevost, "Classical Theism and the Kalam Principle," both in The Logic of Rational Theism: Explanatory Essays, ed. William Lane Craig and Mark S. McLeod (Lewiston: Mellen, 1990), 99–111, 113–25.

17 Deuteronomy 18:22 reads: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously."

18 Richard Rice, "Biblical Support for a New Perspective," in Pinnock et al., The Openness of God, 181 n. 76.
Even though he does not know exactly which moves free persons will make, he knows all possible moves that can be made and that he can meet any such moves and eventually win the game. God may lose some pieces during the games, just as some persons may freely choose to reject God and thwart his plans so far as they are concerned individually, but God can guarantee ultimate victory. Those who reject infallible foreknowledge affirm these propositions about God's knowledge of all possibilities:

1. God is omniscient in the sense that he knows all that can be known, but it is logically impossible to know future acts that are free.
2. God knows all possibilities, including the present probability of any future event.
3. God knows now what his purposes are and that he will achieve them.
4. God does not know now, in every case, precisely which contingent possibility will be chosen or become actual.
5. God knows now how he will respond to whichever contingent possibility occurs to ensure the realization of his purposes.

Thus God can ensure ultimate victory and the realization of all of his purposes not because of his omniscience, but because of his almighty power. These features of God's knowledge ensure that God knows all possibilities and future events which are now certain given causal implications (propositions 1 and 2). This view also allows for free choices among genuinely open alternatives (propositions 2 and 4). These provisions suggest that God knows all possible avenues of choices (propositions 2 and 5) and, coupled with God's maximal power, entail that God's plans and declarations of future events will be realized (propositions 3 and 5). Thus a complete picture of God's providence is possible even though God does not have infallible and complete foreknowledge.

Nevertheless, can limited foreknowledge be squared with scriptural predictions of the future? I will argue that: (a) scripture is consistent with limited foreknowledge, and (b) a number of scriptures require limited foreknowledge. There are several different types of prophecy, each of which is consistent with God's limited foreknowledge:

1. Predictions about what God will bring about through his own power regardless of human decisions. God can clearly predict
his own actions and promises regardless of human decisions. If human cooperation is not involved, then God can unilaterally guarantee the occurrence of a particular event and predict it ahead of time. For example, God can guarantee that his plan will be fulfilled because he will intervene to bring it about. Thus God can show prophets a panoramic vision of his plan from beginning to end. God can declare that he knows the beginning from the end in terms of his plan and what he will bring about himself: “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do my pleasure: ... yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it” (Isaiah 46:10-11). A perfect example of a scriptural passage showing that God knows the future in virtue of what he will bring about through his power is found in 1 Nephi 9:6: “But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of his words.”

However, the fact that God’s plan will be carried out does not mean that he has to know each individual’s free actions beforehand. God has prepared a plan to save all persons if they will keep his commandments. However, not all persons will be saved, despite his plan, because they are free to reject him. God’s plan will be realized, but it is possible that not every person will be finally exalted. God’s plan thus involves a risk that not all persons will be saved. There is a clear contingency in God’s knowledge with respect to the future free acts of individuals. From the Mormon perspective, one of the primary purposes of life was that God wanted “to see if” persons would keep his commandments when granted significantly free will (Abraham 3:25). This desire to learn whether persons would do what God commanded assumes that God does not have complete foreknowledge.

2. Conditional prophecies. Numerous prophecies express what God will do if certain conditions obtain. For example, several prophecies are predictions as to what will happen if human beings behave in one way rather than another. Jeremiah 18:7-8 (Revised Standard Version, RSV) is an example of a conditional prophecy: “If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation,
BECKWITH, PARRISH, CONCEPT OF GOD (OSTLER)

3. Prophecies of Inevitable Consequences of Factors Already Present. Since God’s knowledge of present conditions is complete, it follows that he knows all things that are inevitable as a causal result of present conditions. He also knows the probability of any future event based on current conditions. For example, a skilled physician can predict the death of certain individuals because the causes of that death are already present. Similarly, God can predict future events that are causally implicated by present circumstances or otherwise inevitable. For example, at the time Christ prophesied that Judas would betray him, Judas had already betrayed him by accepting thirty pieces of silver and by promising the Jewish authorities to identify Jesus at the designated place.

4. Absolute Election of Nations and Conditional Election of Individuals. A number of passages in the New Testament speak of God’s foreknowledge in the context of election or foreordination. The New Testament uses a family of words associated with God’s knowledge of the future such as “foreknow” (proginosko), “foresee” (proorao), “foreordain” (proorizo), “foreknowledge” (prognosis), and “foretell” (promarturomai and prokatangello; see 1 Peter 1:2, 20; Ephesians 1:4–5; Romans 8:28–30; Acts 2:23; 4:28). For example, Ephesians 1:11 discusses God’s foreordination of persons, “in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined (prooristhentes) according to the purpose (prothesin) of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (kata ten boulen tou thelmatos autou).” This passage does not speak about what persons do to earn election;

19 Numerous examples of such conditional prophecies are found in the Book of Mormon. For example, the Book of Mormon prophets repeatedly testify that “if it so be that they shall serve [God] according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; . . . for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes” (2 Nephi 1:7).
rather, it focuses exclusively on God’s decision to choose a certain group of persons. Now if individual persons were “predestined” or “elected” to salvation on the basis of God’s own counsel alone, then free will would play no role in individual salvation. God would arbitrarily damn some and leave others to damnation for no act of their own. Thus it is problematic to assert that such passages relate only to God’s action to elect individuals to salvation, as Calvin and Luther claimed.

However, passages speaking about God’s election do not address individual election; rather, they speak of the corporate election of Israel, or the church, or of God’s people as a whole. In a sensitive and careful analysis of the doctrine of election, William G. MacDonald demonstrates that the biblical doctrine of election invariably refers to corporate rather than individual election. The same conclusion was reached by William W. Klein. Thus election is not a reward for an individual exercise of free will but a divine decision unilaterally made to elect a group of people as his “chosen” or “promised” people. Although the election is certain, the promises made to any individual member of the elect group are conditional upon faithfulness to God. Such corporate election is not inconsistent with individual free will.

It is of course true that God sometimes foreordains individual persons to specific callings. Yet the foreordination of individuals is conditional. For example, God’s foreordination of Samson as a chosen vessel did not imply that it was inevitable that Samson would fulfill that calling. In fact, Samson failed. Moreover, individual calls represent a summons to service and not a guarantee of individual salvation based upon acts of free will. Thus no prediction is made about individual acts when an individual is elected or foreordained to a particular calling.

Biblical Support for the Open View of God

The biblical record gives strong indications that God’s knowledge of future free acts is not complete. For example, when God speaks in scripture he uses terms implying uncertainty such as if (Heb. 'im) or perhaps or maybe (Heb. 'ûlay). Other scriptures demonstrate that though God had expressed an intention to carry out a certain judgment, God changes his mind when the people repent. Certainly it is impossible to change one’s mind if one already knows what will occur.

Some rather strong indications exist in scripture that God does not know all future contingents. First, even though some scriptures present Jesus as omniscient, it is clear that others do not.22 Indeed, Jesus seems to have expected the kingdom of God to come in power and glory before the end of his present generation, even before all of the seventy returned from their missions throughout Judea.23 But it makes no sense to argue that Jesus must have known that the kingdom was not coming that soon because he was omniscient, for the scripture expressly states that the Son of Man did not know when the kingdom would come. Jesus does not know all things.

In the Hebrew scripture, the word ‘ûlay meaning “perhaps” or “maybe” is used in divine speech. For instance, God is portrayed as saying:

Son of man, prepare for yourself an exile’s baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight. . . . Perhaps [‘ûlay] they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. (NSV Ezekiel 12:2–3)

Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak. . . . It may be [‘ûlay] they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the evil. (RSV Jeremiah 26:2–3; for other uses of ‘ûlay, see Jeremiah 36:3, 7; 51:8; Isaiah 47:12; Luke 20:13).

23 Ibid., 71–79.
How shall we understand such passages? Terence E. Fretheim, professor of Old Testament at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, suggests that it "seems clear from such passages that God is quite uncertain as to how the people will respond to the prophetic word. God is certainly aware of the various possibilities regarding Israel’s response. One might even say that God, given a thoroughgoing knowledge of Israel, knows what its response is likely to be. . . . Yet, in God’s own words, God does not finally know."24 That Fretheim is correct, and that God actually was uncertain as to what Israel would do, is supported by RSV Jeremiah 3:7 and 19:

And I thought,
 "After she has done all this she will return to me";
but she did not return. . . .
"I thought
how I would set you among my sons,
and give you a pleasant land,
a heritage most beauteous of all nations.
And I thought you would call me, My Father
and would not turn from following me.
Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband,
so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel."

Fretheim observes of this passage; “Here God is depicted as actually thinking that the people would respond positively to the initial election, or that they would return after a time of straying. But events proved that God’s outlook on the future was too optimistic. The people did not respond as God thought they would. God’s knowledge of future human actions is thus clearly represented as limited.”25 Perhaps those holding that God has absolute foreknowledge will interpret this passage in a manner consistent with the belief that God actually knew what Israel would do and assert that we have an example of the dreaded anthropomorphism of the Old Testament in this passage. Fretheim observes that such readings “buy us an absolute form of omniscience at the price of

25 Ibid.
placing the integrity of the text and coherence of all of God’s words in jeopardy: does God mean it or not? These texts show that Israel’s future is genuinely open and not predetermined. The future of Israel does not only not exist, it has not even been finally decided upon. Hence, it is not something that even exists to be known, even if the knower is God.”

It seems to me that the only way to preserve the integrity of this text is to admit that God experienced, nay suffered, disappointment when he discovered that Israel would reject him, especially after expecting that Israel would love him as a son loves a father.

Exodus 32:7–14 (cf. Deuteronomy 9:13–29), where God is portrayed as changing his mind after a consultation with Moses, is of similar import. Yahweh told Moses that he intended to destroy Israel for having made the golden calf, and Moses objected and actually argued that such a course would be unworthy of God. As Childs observed, the key to understanding the encounter is God’s response to Moses: “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against [Israel] (v. 10)”;

God had actually formed an intention to execute wrath; it was something that “he thought to do” (v. 14). This passage shows that, while God had decided to destroy Israel, “the decision had not yet reached an irretrievable point; Moses could conceivably contribute something to the divine deliberation that might occasion a future for Israel other than wrath.”

Remarkably, Moses persuaded God to recant what he had decided to do: “And the Lord repented of the evil He thought to do unto His people” (v. 14). The most faithful way to understand this passage, it seems to me, is to view Yahweh as having formed an intention to do one thing—and thus at one time believing that he would do it—and at a later time changing his mind and coming to believe something different. Yet if God did not know at the time of his conversation with Moses whether Israel would be destroyed, then certainly there were a good many things about the future that he did not know. Some Mormons may point out that when Joseph Smith revised the Bible, he changed all of the passages suggesting that God repented—implying that such

26 Ibid., 47.
28 Fretheim, The Suffering of God, 50.
changes were made because the Prophet Joseph Smith believed that repentance could not be appropriate to a being that cannot possibly be mistaken about any belief or sin in any way. Nevertheless, the Joseph Smith translation of this passage makes God’s change of mind even more explicit, and thus recognizes that God changed his mind: “The Lord said unto Moses, If they will repent of the evil which they have done, I will spare them. . . . Therefore, see thou do this thing that I have commanded thee, or I will execute all that which I had thought to do unto my people” (JST Exodus 32:13–14).

Still other passages suggest that some predictions of future events are conditional and that God does not know precisely what will happen, though he intends to persuade people to freely repent. A good example of such a conditional prophecy is found in RSV Jeremiah 22:4–5: “If (‘im) you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David. . . . But if (‘im) you will not heed these words, . . . this house shall become a desolation.” Numerous similar conditional prophecies occur throughout the Old Testament, the Book of Mormon, and modern Mormon scripture. Is the if in such passages to be taken with full seriousness? For example, the book of Abraham suggests that one of God’s purposes in establishing his plan and this earth was to learn something about humans: “We will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:24–25). It seems to me that this passage doesn’t make any sense at all if the future is already determinate and God already knew from all eternity exactly what we will do without actually “seeing if” persons will do what he has commanded. Indeed, the very earnestness of mortality in Mormon thought derives its force from the view that the future is genuinely open and as yet undecided and therefore truly up to us to declare to God who we will be—a fact he is waiting with loving interest to discover along with us. God is waiting on us to see if we will be faithful.

One final type of text may be taken as evidence that God’s knowledge is dependent on what actually happens. In the book of Jonah, the prophet Jonah declared that “yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4). In response to this
proclamation, the city of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and repented of its evil ways. "The word of the Lord" came to the king of Nineveh: "Who can tell if (ti) God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah 3:9). In response to the repentance of the people of Nineveh, God changed his mind and decided not to do what he had declared he would do: "And God saw their works, and they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10). Jonah's response was undoubtedly similar to what a believer in absolute foreknowledge might experience when expectations about God have been shattered by concrete dealings with God involved in an open future that can have results unanticipated even by God: Jonah was "very angry" with God. Jonah complains: "O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? . . . I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:1). This picture of God presented by patience, kindness, and mercy is possible only within a genuine relationship in which all responses and outcomes are not already determined before the responses and decisions are made. Moreover, if such decisions are not already made, then how can it be that God infallibly knows beforehand what the decision is? Perhaps the book of Jonah can teach us something about God—maybe even something unexpected and outside our preconceived notions about how God must be. As Abraham Heschel commented, "This is the mysterious paradox of Hebrew faith: The All wise and Almighty may change a word that He proclaims. Man has power to modify His design. . . . God's answer to Jonah, stressing the supremacy of compassion, upsets the possibility of looking for a rational coherence of God's ways with the world."

As Clark Pinnock asserted:

According to the Bible, God anticipates the future in a way analogous to our own experience. God tests Abraham to see what the patriarch will do, and then says through his messenger, "Now I know that you

fear God" (Gen. 22:12). God threatens Ninevah with destruction, and then calls it off when they repent (Jonah 3:10). I do not receive the impression from the Bible that the future is all sewn up and foreknown. The future is envisaged as a realm in which significant decisions can still be made which can change the course of history.30

4. God's Immutability and Timelessness

The authors next argue that God is unchanging in the sense that his nature never changes. In other words, God has always been and always will be God (p. 14). They argue that if God is immutable in this sense, then it follows that he is also timeless in some sense (p. 15). In contrast, they argue that in Mormonism God was once not God, because he became God through a course of moral development. They imply that there was a time when God was not fully divine (p. 43).

This seems to be a bit confused. The fact that God has always been God, or even that he is constant in character and moral resolve, does not entail that he is immutable or timeless. For example, assume that I have had and will always have the same human nature and moral commitments. It does not follow that I am unchanging, much less that I am timeless. I could move from here to there or change my mind while still having the same human nature. Similarly, God could at one time be angry with Israel and at another time be pleased with Israel and yet still be God at both times. Thus God could be both temporal and mutable while still remaining God.

When medieval theologians assert that God is immutable, they mean much more than that God has always had the same divine nature. They mean that none of God's intrinsic properties, whether accidental or essential, could be different. Further, if God is timeless, then God cannot change in any sense. Everything that is true of God is true of him in the single nontemporal instant of

the eternal now. Yet for something to change it must be in time, for it must be characterized at some time before the change differently from some time after the change. Thus the authors are incorrect when they assert that God’s immutable nature entails that God is timeless. However, it is true that if God is timeless, then God is unchanging, but in a sense much stronger than they intended.

Though they assert that God does not change in nature and that God is timeless in the sense that God’s nature is not within temporal succession, the authors accept that God is changing in his “relational consciousness,” for they admit that:

God’s relational consciousness changed when Nineveh repented—i.e., God chose not to destroy the city—but His intrinsic inner being remained constant and immutable (in this case, the moral aspect of His nature). Hence, the change in God’s relational consciousness is such that it functions in accordance with His immutable intrinsic inner being. In this sense, God is immutable. (p. 15)

Thus the authors accept that what happens in the world can affect and change “God’s relational consciousness” or knowledge of what is happening in the world. However, acceptance of this type of change is clearly incompatible with both God’s immutability and timelessness. Recall the story of Jonah and Nineveh which they try to explain away as a counterexample to divine immutability. Before Nineveh’s repentance, God had warned through Jonah that “Nineveh will be destroyed” because the people had been wicked. However, the people repented and God was moved by this repentance not to destroy them. At one point in time God intended to destroy Nineveh. At a later point in time, after seeing Ninevah’s repentance, God no longer had this

---

32 The authors are here interpreting W. Norris Clarke.
intention. Thus it certainly seems that God changed his intentions as to how he would treat the people of Ninevah. Indeed, the authors assert that God changed this intention “when” or at the time the people of Ninevah repented. But the people of Ninevah repented at a specific temporal time. Thus God was affected and changed his resolve to destroy Ninevah also at this time. But if God changed in this sense then he is both mutable and within time.33

The authors also contend that there is no problem in conceiving a timeless God acting in time, for it is possible for God to timelessly will that effects occur in temporal succession (p. 17). I am inclined to agree that it is possible for God to will in timeless eternity and for what is willed by God to occur in temporal time. However, it is not sufficient merely that God timelessly will that a temporal effect occur and that it occur, for it can’t be by mere coincidence that what God wills just happens to occur. God’s will must somehow be causally related to the effect in time. But it is problematic, to say the least, to coherently suppose that a timeless will causes the temporal effect, for causation is a temporal relation.34

33 The authors’ argument here is merely sloppy, for it is clear that they really don’t mean what they say. They don’t really mean that God decided not to destroy the Ninevites “when,” or at the temporal time that the Ninevites repented. What the authors really mean is that God timelessly knew that the people of Ninevah would repent and that God never had any intention to destroy them (p. 16). They could say that although God told Jonah he intended to destroy Ninevah, God really never had such intention. Since God knew Ninevah would repent, they might argue that God timelessly intended to destroy Ninevah. However, this reading appears to make God a liar as to his true intentions, for he declares through Jonah that he does intend to destroy Ninevah. It seems to me that this scripture can be interpreted consistently with the text only if God is limited in his foreknowledge. At the time he threatened destruction he expected Ninevah to continue in its wickedness. He didn’t know Ninevah would repent. He was pleasantly surprised when they did repent. This interpretation entails that God’s intentions changed when the Ninevites repented and that he is thus mutable and temporal, or changing and within temporal succession.

34 For example, suppose that God has timelessly willed that it will rain in May 1997. There must be more than just God’s willing that it rain and that it in fact rains, for it cannot be just by chance that it rains. God must cause it to rain. But when does this cause occur? It seems that God’s causal activity cannot remain isolated from temporal succession because a cause must be temporally continuous with the temporal effect. Thus God’s will cannot remain untainted by
It is for this reason that I believe it remains problematic to assert that a timeless God creates a world, enters into a relationship or responds to a prayer, for all of these actions presuppose a causal (or at least a dependence relationship) and therefore a temporal relationship between God and the world.

Finally, the authors argue that the notion that God "progresses" or is otherwise temporal is not scriptural. The authors cite several Old Testament texts (Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40:28; 43:12-13; 57:15) that use the word "ʿolām, and assume it refers to timelessness (p. 121). However, it merely means an indefinite period of time. It does not mean a timeless eternity. None of the scriptures cited by the authors support any conclusion stronger than that: (1) God’s character and commitment are stable and unchanging; (2) God is everlasting or has always existed; and (3) God is immune from the ravages of time. They do not support the stronger claim made by the authors that God transcends all temporal succession and changes in no intrinsic properties.

Almost all biblical scholars agree that God’s time is different from the time-metric of our world, but that God is involved in a temporal relation to the world. Terence Fretheim concluded:

The God of the OT is thus not thought of in terms of timelessness. At least since creation, the divine life is temporally ordered . . . God is not above the flow of time and history, as if looking down from some supratemporal mountaintop on all the streams of people through the valleys of the age. God is “inside time,” not outside of it . . . The OT witnesses to a God who truly shares in human history as past, present and future, and in such a way that we must speak of a history of God.

37 Fretheim, The Suffering of God, 43–44.
A number of Old Testament passages clearly entail separate temporal moments in God's internal life:

He will not always chide,
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
(Psalm 103:9; cf. Isaiah 57:16; Jeremiah 3:12; Micah 7:18)

His anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
(RSV Psalm 30:5; cf. Ezra 9:8; Ps. 85:3)

For a brief moment I forsook you....
In overflowing wrath for a moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you.
(RSV Isaiah 54:7–8; cf. Isaiah 26:20; Exodus 33:5)

The same conclusion is supported by the New Testament. The authors cite two texts that use the word aion, translated in Romans 1:20 variously as “everlasting” or “eternal,” in the sense of enduring through all time. They also cite 1 Timothy 1:17, which calls God the “eternal king” or “king of ages” (in the KJV)—translating the phrase “basilei ton aionon.” It is quite ironic that these texts support the view that God is everlasting—or exists forever in a temporal framework—not the view that he is timeless in the sense of transcending temporal succession.38

The most important study on the subject of the concept of “eternity” in the Bible forcefully argues that the idea of an absolute timeless eternity is absent from the New Testament—just as it is from the Old Testament.39 A similar conclusion was reached in a recent study by Alan Padgett, who concluded: “If the OT and the NT nowhere teach nor imply an absolute timeless divine eternity, how did exegetes and theologians so deceive themselves? Cullman is surely right to point to the influence of Platonism on the Christian tradition.”40

Once again we find Beckwith and Parrish chiding Mormons for not worshipping the God of Plato and Aristotle. The God of Abraham is a very different being from the God they propose.

5. God as the Source of Moral Values and as Perfectly Good

The authors also argue that God is perfectly good in the sense that he logically cannot fail to be good (pp. 22–23). They assert that, in contrast, it is logically possible for the Mormon God to make morally wrong decisions because he became God by making free decisions and could have failed to become God (p. 44). Thus they conclude that their God is a perfectly good God whereas the Mormon God is not. I think that they intend their readers to conclude (though they do not say) that the classical God is morally superior to the Mormon God. However, I believe that this position is rather deceptive because, properly speaking, the classical God is not a moral being in any meaningful sense.

In my view the doctrine of God’s essential goodness is a hard pill to swallow. The upshot of the doctrine is that God is not a moral agent because it is not possible for God to make any morally wrong decisions. It is certainly no great moral defect to be so virtuous that one does not make morally wrong decisions; it is quite another problem if the reason no wrong decisions are made is that it is logically impossible to make a wrong decision. The Mormon God can be relied upon to make morally correct decisions because (1) the Godhead is a perfect loving unity and (2) the individual divine persons have forged a character solidly committed to the good over aeons of time. The Mormon God is a moral being whereas the classical God presented by the authors is not. In my opinion, the Mormon God is the only candidate in the running for a morally perfect being.

I also think that the doctrine that moral principles are simply identical to God’s will is not philosophically acceptable. While God certainly can impose moral obligations upon his creatures to respond to his commands arising out of his love and gracious acts, the divine command theory presented by the authors entails that good and evil are arbitrary. The authors recognize the problem created by asserting that something is good merely because God
commands it, for God could then command that our entire moral duty consists in murdering six million Jews and that such acts would have to be considered “good.” However, they alter this doctrine by locating the source of moral values not in God’s will, but in God’s nature. Since God’s will is subject to his essentially good nature, they claim that God can never will anything evil. Moreover, they argue that moral values are not arbitrary because God’s nature is the same in every possible world. However, if God’s nature is logically prior to God’s will, then God is stuck with whatever his nature happens to dictate—and in this sense moral values are clearly arbitrary. God is not morally free on such a view because he cannot will that his nature be different. Finally, love becomes the ultimate moral principle on such a view rather than God’s will—so they effectively abandon the divine command theory they seek to defend. Accordingly, these problems are sufficient reason to jettison the classical view of God’s logically necessary goodness. I prefer the Mormon view that sees God as a person who is worthy of praise and worship precisely because he could go wrong, but in the excellence of his personal character has freely decided to do what is good.41 The bottom line is that the Mormon God is a moral being in the fullest sense, whereas it is doubtful that the God presented by Beckwith and Parrish is moral in any meaningful sense.

6. Can the Universe Be Infinitely Old?

Joseph Smith rejected the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, affirming rather that the most basic constituents of the world (intellegences and chaotic matter) are beginningless, self-existent, and uncreated. This view seems to imply that the world’s constituents are infinitely old and that there has been an infinite series of events in time. Many of the authors’ philosophical objections to Mormon theism are variations of the age-old arguments against the possibility of an actual infinite. The following argument which the authors take from William L. Craig is representative:

1. The series of events in time is a collection formed by adding one member after another.

2. A collection formed by adding one member after another cannot be actually infinite.

3. Therefore, the series of events in time cannot be actually infinite.

Of course, Mormons will reject both premises 1 and 2. The authors try to prove premise 2 by reducing its negation to an absurdity. If the series of events has no beginning, then every event has been preceded by an infinite number of events. But if one can never arrive at infinity by adding one member after another, one would have never arrived at the present day, because to do so one would have had to "cross" (or complete) an infinite number of days. Of course, if this argument or any of its related variants is sound, then not only are certain formulations of Latter-day Saint theism incoherent, but so also is the deity of process theology, which has always existed in a process of ever greater organizing perfection, and also the temporal deity of Christians elucidated by Nicholas Wolterstorff, Richard Swinburne, etc. In addition, the view of many theologians such as Origen and Thomas Aquinas that God could have created a world from all temporal eternity is similarly rendered false.

The authors argue that because an actual infinite is impossible, an array of Mormon beliefs is false, including the view that the world is eternally old, that beings eternally progress, that an infinite number of spirits exists and that omniscience in a spatially infinite world is impossible (ch. 3). Now this type of argument is not new, and with the exception of its application to particular Mormon beliefs, is merely a rehash of William Craig’s arguments against process thought.42 The argument that an actual infinite is impossible has been accepted by very few philosophers and in fact has been refuted, decisively in my view, by a number of modern philosophers.43 Nevertheless, the authors dust the argument off

---

42 Beckwith and Parrish’s entire argument is dependent upon William Craig almost to the point of plagiarism. See, Craig, “Creation ex nihilo,” in Process Theology, 143–73.

for another round and imply that Mormons should jump ship because they have an argument to show that their world view is false.

To understand whether, and if so how, an actual infinity is possible has been a vexing problem from antiquity, at least since Zeno formulated his famous paradoxes. Zeno argued that in order for the arrow to reach the target or the hare to catch the tortoise, they would first have to traverse an infinite number of halfway points. But this was logically impossible. I think that we are justified in seeing such infinity arguments as a sleight-of-hand trick like Zeno’s paradoxes, for even though a baseball must pass through an infinite number of halfway points to reach the catcher’s mitt, somehow the baseball actually makes it to the mitt, just as the arrow reaches the target and the hare passes the tortoise. The “magic” occurs in distracting attention from the fact that the logic of infinite sets differs from the logic applied to individual members of such sets.

Several different versions of the argument designed to show that an actual infinite is impossible are given by the authors. The first version is roughly that it is impossible to traverse an infinite number of days, for no matter how long one were traveling, one would still only have traveled a finite number of days. Since the universe began “an infinite number of days ago,” it could never reach the present. Unless one can reach an “infinite number of days ago” the universe cannot be infinitely old (pp. 55–57).

However, this type of argument commits the (rather obvious) logical fallacy of composition. It assumes that the first day in an infinite set must have the same properties as the infinite set of days, that is, that some day is the “infinitieth day.” There is no such thing as a day which occurred an “infinite number of days ago” simply because there is no such thing as the “ infinitieth day.” The same fallacy is committed when a person asserts that a


large crowd of people must be a crowd of large people—and that also is clearly false. It is also like saying there cannot be an infinite number of integers unless one of them is the "infinitieth" integer—which is clearly wrongheaded. Thus one who believes that the universe is infinitely old does not assert that one of those days was the infinitieth day which occurred an infinite number of days ago. Rather, any given day occurred a finite time ago even though there is an infinite set consisting of days during which the world has existed. There simply is no first day, so the argument is invalid.

The authors respond to this type of answer that

actually, the fact that there was no first moment really is of no help. . . . The absence of a first term merely accentuates the problem of affirming an infinite past, . . . for if one cannot in principle reach a day that occurred an infinite number of days ago, . . . this only goes to prove the impossibility of traversing an actual infinite. (pp. 57-58)

Now this is a remarkable response indeed, for the authors claim their argument is even stronger if the premises are false! The reason that one cannot reach a day that occurred an infinite number of days ago is that the very notion is a category mistake. Once again, infinity is a property of the entire set of moments that make up the infinite past, not a property of any individual moment. Thus the entire argument is a disaster in reasoning.

A second argument is based upon the supposed paradoxes that arise from unequal infinities. For example, suppose that we have an infinite set of baseball cards from which we give away 100,000 cards to charity. The authors assume that the number of cards in the infinite set is equal to the set with 100,000 fewer cards because, after all, both are infinite in number. They object, "these conclusions are patently absurd" (p. 66). Now this argument consists of a mistaken view that all infinities must be equal and expresses a mere prejudice against an actual infinite—and nothing more. Once one grasps the intricacies of infinite set theory (which the authors have apparently failed to do) there is nothing
contradictory in unequal infinities. This conclusion may be strange or even exciting, but not incoherent.

The fallacy is that, as the mathematician Cantor has elegantly shown, not all infinite sets must be equal. Cantor bids us to consider two infinite but unequal sets, the set of all ordinal numbers and the set of all even numbers. The coherence of infinite sets that are unequal can be demonstrated by pairing members of each set in a one-to-one correspondence. Even though both sets are infinite, the set of even numbers is only half as large as the set of ordinal numbers. The authors acknowledge a coherent mathematical theory in which infinities are not equal, but they object that a mere coherent theory of infinite numbers does not mean that there could actually be an infinite collection in the real world (pp. 66–67). Yet their claim is precisely that the notion is logically “incoherent.” How can they admit such coherence and yet claim that unequal infinities cannot occur in the actual world? If the notion is logically coherent, then there is a possible world in which it can obtain. The further question as to whether an infinite collection actually exists is not an issue of logic but of empirical evidence—and they offer no evidence that such infinities are impossible in the actual world.

Moreover, there is strong intuitive support for the view that the universe could be infinitely old. One must ask at what point in the past it becomes logically impossible that the world exists. It seems that no matter how far back in time one goes to any particular past moment, it is logically possible that the world existed at that moment. But how large is the collection or series of moments at which it is possible that the world existed? The number certainly appears to be unlimited or infinite. But if the collection of times at which it is possible that the world exists is infinite, it follows that it is coherent to assert that the world is infinitely old. Thus there is good reason to believe that the universe could have existed without beginning.

I judge the arguments of Beckwith and Parrish to show that an actual infinite is impossible to be not only a failure, but a rather miserable failure at that. They offer other arguments, but they can all be answered along lines that I have outlined above.

---

7. Does Mormonism Better Explain Existence?

In chapter 4, the authors challenge David L. Paulsen's claim that the argument from design supports the God of Mormon theism more convincingly than the God of classical theism.46 He has argued that while the apparent design in the world points to an intelligent designer, the world's equally apparent disorder and evolutionary development point to an intelligent designer who is not absolutely unlimited or unconditioned. The authors' discussion effectively challenges Latter-day Saint thinkers to explain more clearly how divine theology fits into their total world view, but two of their main objections to Paulsen's argument are seemingly based on misunderstandings. They claim that since the God of Latter-day Saint theism is not a necessary being, he cannot serve as explanation of our world's apparent teleology. But Joseph Smith explicitly taught, and Mormons generally believe, that God is a self-existent being—thus there is no possible world in which he fails to exist.47

A second main objection is that Latter-day Saint theism "is not the only possible way to explain the disorder and order of the world, since the facts could be explained equally well by a number of different hypotheses, such as an infinite God who is uninterested in immorality, a couple of warring Gods (one good and one evil)" (pp. 104–5). The authors' objection misses the point, for the claim they make is not one that Paulsen has denied. He argued only that Latter-day Saint theism accounts for our world's actual mix of order and disorder more illuminatingly than does classical theism, not that there is no other possible explanation. For example, why would God plod through millions of years of evolution with the entire scene of tooth and claw, blood and pain experienced by animals if he could have created highly evolved organisms instantly? Paulsen shows that Latter-day Saint theism can account for such facts. The authors simply fail to address this issue.

46 David L. Paulsen, "Comparative Coherence of Mormon (Finistic) and Classical Theism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1975).

47 See, e.g., the King Follet Discourse. "We say that God was self-existent[,] who told you so? It's correct enough but how did you get the idea into your head[?]" in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., The Words of Joseph Smith (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 359.
One last comment is in order about their final argument. The authors contend (in chapter 4) that only a logically necessary God can fully explain the existence of the ordered material universe. The authors nowhere show that God's existence is logically necessary, and very few Christians accept ontological arguments purporting to demonstrate the point. However, they claim that the Mormon God won't do because the Mormon God is himself an organized being in need of explanation. But their argument is wrongheaded twice over. First, God is a necessary being in Mormon thought. Second, their assumption that theism can provide a full explanation of existence is illusory.

Addressing the second point first, theism has no complete explanation of existence. Even if the existence of everything but the classical God can be explained by reference to God, it is still the case that God's decision to create is a matter of ultimately unexplained exercise of free will. Thus, within Christian thought, any attempt to find an ultimate causal explanation for why something exists at all is ultimately an unexplained fact.

On the other hand, it seems perfectly acceptable to regard the material universe's existence as not needing an explanation. For example, uniform motion does not need an explanation in Newtonian physics. What needs explanation is change of motion. To remain in motion is natural given the Newtonian system of physical explanation. Similarly as the conservation laws of modern science demonstrate, existence is the natural state of mass/energy. Given conservation laws, the existence of mass/energy does not need an explanation. Given Mormon cosmology, the existence of mass/energy needs no explanation—it is the natural state of the universe. What needs explanation is the intricate design of the universe for human purposes. Thus the entire argument that the authors offer in chapter 4 of their book is based on a questionable assumption, i.e., that the existence of mass and energy is in need of explanation.

8. Do Mormons Misconstrue Scriptures?

On the issue of whether the Mormon or the classical concept of God is closer to the biblical portrait, the authors (a) take Mormons to task for imposing their own previously adopted
world view on the biblical text and (b) argue that when the text is allowed to speak for itself, it provides a concept of God that is nearly, if not absolutely, identical with the classical view. With regard to (a), the authors argue:

Mormons begin their interpretation of the Bible with the assumption that Joseph Smith is God’s prophet and that his teachings are correct. And since Smith’s teachings include the Mormons’ unique concept of God, Mormons tend to “find” their view in the Bible. ... Hence, only by presupposing the truth of their position are the Mormons successful in “finding” their concept of God in the Bible. Clearly this is a case of circular reasoning. (p. 109)

No doubt the authors have provided a correct description of how many Mormons interpret the biblical text. But whether this is proper practice or question-begging seems to depend on context. Within the perspective of the Latter-day Saint community, this seems to be a perfectly proper way to read the text. Latter-day Saints believe that the biblical text constitutes ancient revelation and that God has resumed (with Joseph Smith) and continues to give (through Smith’s successors) revelation in our day. Mormons read the ancient revelations in the light of what they take to be God’s total, especially his contemporary, revelation. What could be more reasonable? On the other hand, the authors seem quite right on this point: over against one who does not accept modern revelation to thus argue for a Mormon interpretation of the Bible is indeed circular and question-begging. However, the authors’ objection itself is also question-begging. The prior question to be resolved is: Are Joseph Smith and his successors God’s prophets? And this question will have to be resolved on some basis other than a biblical exegesis which assumes either that they are or are not.

With regard to (b), the authors attempt to formulate some metaphysically neutral principles of interpretation, and then purportedly use them in reaching the conclusion that the biblical portrait of God just is the classical view. Unfortunately, it seems obvious that the authors make exactly the same kind of move they chide the Mormons for making: assuming a particular
metaphysical world view and reading the text from that perspective. And they do it, not only by way of violation, but in the very formulation, of their own hermeneutical principles. To demonstrate the latter point first: the authors propose four principles of biblical interpretation: (1) “Permit the text to speak for itself. That is, unless the text is obviously symbolic or figurative, ... we should stick to the plain meaning of the text, and not read into the Bible doctrines that are otherwise totally foreign to the text.” (2) Interpret scriptural passages in light of their immediate and general “spheres of context.” (3) Do not “confuse passages that specifically speak of God’s essence with those which describe God’s relationship to humans.” (4) Do not “reason that because the Bible does not specifically forbid or mention something, therefore the Bible implicitly approves of it” (pp. 110–12). But principle 3 contradicts principle 1. Principle 3 apparently instructs us (and the authors faithfully follow the instruction) to read the text in the light of the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine of essence—a doctrine that is totally foreign to the text—rather than permitting the text to speak for itself as required by principle 1.

As an instance of the authors’ violation of principle 1, consider their argument that the Bible teaches creation ex nihilo. They cite several biblical passages that identify God as the creator of all things, and then argue: “Since pre-existent matter would be the material cause of the universe, and since this passage teaches that no cause except God can account for the universe, this passage clearly teaches creation ex nihilo” (pp. 117 n. 16; 126). The authors assume that biblical writers were familiar with the Aristotelian doctrine of “material cause” and meant to exclude it when they identified God as creator.

Rather than reaching their conclusions on the basis of presuppositionless principles of interpretation, it seems apparent that the authors reach them on the basis of their own presupposed world view.

In all likelihood there is no metaphysically neutral way to read the text. If so, why feign one?
Is Creation Ex Nihilo Scriptural?

Many non-Mormon scholars, who have carefully treated this issue, reject the authors' claims that the Bible (i) teaches that the universe was created by God out of nothing, and (ii) nowhere teaches that the world was created out of preexistent matter (p.116). For instance, with respect to the first claim, Richard Sorabji concludes: "There is no clear statement in the Bible, or in Jewish-Hellenistic literature, of creation out of nothing (in a sense which includes a beginning of the material universe). On the contrary, such a view was invented by Christians in the second century A.D., in controversy with the Gnostics."48 David Winston concurs.49 The notion was first expressed by the Christian Neoplatonist Tatian50 and by Theophilus circa 185 A.D.51

Moreover, as to the second claim, the Bible contains clear statements of creation out of chaos.52 Job chapters 28 and 38 refer to God bringing order out of preexisting chaos. Moreover, Genesis 1:1 seems to be a clear reference to creation out of chaos. The Harper's Bible Commentary reads:

As most modern translations recognize, the P creation account (1:1–2:4a) begins with a temporal clause ("When, in the beginning, God created"); such a translation puts Gen. 1:1 in agreement with the opening of the J account (2:4b) and with other ancient, Near Eastern creation myths. . . . The description of the pre-creation state in v.2 probably is meant to suggest a storm-tossed sea: darkness, a great wind, the water abyss . . . chaotic forces.53

---

48 Sorabji, Time, Creation, and the Continuum, 194.
50 Tatian, Ad Grecos 5.
51 Theophilus, Ad Autolycum II, 4 and 10.
The most respected commentary on Genesis is by E. A. Speiser, who translates 1:1 in the same way (as a temporal clause) and then adds:

   To be sure, the present interpretation precludes the view that the creation accounts in Genesis say nothing about coexistent matter. The question, however, is not the ultimate truth about cosmogony, but only the exact meaning of the Genesis passages which deal with the subject. . . . At all events, the text should be allowed to speak for itself.54

The drama of God’s creating by organizing chaos is thoroughly treated by Jon D. Levenson, the Albert A. List Professor at Harvard University:

   Although it is now generally recognized that creation ex nihilo . . . is not an adequate characterization of creation in the Hebrew Bible, the legacy of this dogmatic or propositional understanding lives on and continues to distort the perceptions of scholars and lay persons alike. In particular, a false finality and definiteness is ascribed to God’s act of creation, consequently, the fragility of the created order and its vulnerability to chaos tend to be played down.55

If Beckwith and Parrish desire to reject the notion of God’s creating by organizing a cosmos out of chaos, they must overlook the primary thrust of the Hebrew Bible. But they are not alone in wearing opaque eyeglasses that blind them to this biblical view, for centuries of theologians steeped in Augustinian theology have done the same.

9. Monotheism and a Plurality of Divine Persons

   The authors also chide Mormons because they teach that “there exists more than one God [and that] . . . an individual can

progress to Godhood” (p. 113). They present a statement from an evangelical scholar to the effect that Elohim really cannot mean “gods” when referring to Israel’s God, and then conclude:

Any “successful” argument from the Bible to defend the Mormon view of polytheism must commit the logical fallacies of argument from ignorance and begging the question, and that is too high a price to pay for “biblical support.” Therefore, it is safe to say without reservation that the Bible supports strict monotheism, and hence, denies the existence of any god besides the one true and living God. (p. 114)

The authors give no examples of Mormon usage of scripture, do not explain the biblical support Mormons claim for their doctrine of a “plurality of gods,” and generally assume that any Mormon usage of scripture to support their view must be logically fallacious. About the only thing that can be concluded “without reservation” from the authors’ smug argument is that the authors have committed the fallacies of hasty generalization and expressing a mere prejudice. Nor do the authors ever explain what they mean by “strict monotheism.” However, any Christian who accepts the Trinity surely accepts something less than “strict monotheism.”

Take, for example, one of the scriptures cited by the authors to support their view of “strict monotheism”: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (RSV 1 Timothy 2:5). If there is only one God, who is this man that is a mediator between God and man? Certainly if this one God is the only God, then this mediator is not a God. Yet the New Testament repeatedly claims that this mediator is God. How can we reconcile these two claims?

Or take another example of a scripture quoted by the authors to show that there is only one God: “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:6). If there is one God who is the Father, then who is this second person who is Lord? The use of the term Lord was surely understood to be a reference to Yahweh, the God of the
Old Testament. But now we see why the presentation of the authors is less than straightforward—such passages cannot logically be reconciled with the authors’ view of God. Consider the following:

a. There is only one God (Assumption of Strict Monotheism).
b. The Father is God.
c. The Son is God.
d. The Father is not the Son.

The affirmation of any three of these premises entails the denial of the fourth. From premise a, b, and c it follows that the Son and Father are identical—the Sabellian heresy or modalism arose from this view that the Father and the Son are merely different modes of manifestation of the only God. But such a view must deny the very fundamental Christian assertion that the Father is not identical to the Son. The mediator between the Father and humankind cannot be identical to the Father. Yet this appears to be the position taken by the authors.

On the other hand, the authors accuse Mormons of denying premise a, and thus affirming that there is more than one God. Such a position is clearly entailed by acceptance of premises b, c, and d. Whether there is only one God or more, however, depends on the sense in which the word God is used. There is an equivocation in the word “God” in this argument. In premise a, if the word “God” refers to the entire Godhead, or the three divine persons who are united as “one divine agency,” then it is consistent with the New Testament. Mormons can accept premises b and c only if the word “God” refers to the individual divine persons rather than to “God’s essence” or to the Trinity as a whole, as the authors use it. The failure to understand the nature of this equivocation has led to a misunderstanding of the Mormon position by both Mormons and non-Mormons.

A clear distinction between the divine persons allows a coherent notion of three divine persons united as one God. For example, it is coherent to assert the conjunction of: (a) There is only one Godhead; (b) the Father is a divine person; (c) the Son is a

divine person, but (d) the Father is not identical to the Son. The reason that these propositions are conjointly coherent is that the word “God” functions differently when it refers to the Godhead than when it refers to the individual divine persons.

Beckwith and Parrish fail to understand the different senses in which Mormons—and the biblical record—use the word God. For example, it is perfectly coherent to say that in water there is a single molecule of water; yet there are three atoms in this one molecule, two of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Molecules exist on a different level of organization than atoms. Thus on the molecular level of existence there may be only one entity while on the atomic level there are many entities in that one thing. In a similar way, it is coherent to assert that there is a single God or Godhead, yet there are three divine persons “in” God. When the divine persons are united in a profoundly loving relationship it is appropriate to recognize that they necessarily act as one being on a new level of corporate existence. There is a single mind in the sense that what one divine person knows, the others know; what one wills, the others will. There is also a single act for any state of affairs brought about by the divine persons acting as one almighty agency. What one does, they all do. Thus, in this sense, there is only one God.

The New Testament also uses the word God to refer in a unique way to the Father. The Apostle Paul reserves the designator God for the Father and refers to the Son by other designators such as mediator or Son or Lord. Thus in this sense there is also only one God, the Father. A similar emphasis upon the Father as God in a unique sense is found in the Gospel of John. In the Prologue, the Word is truly God, but the fact that he is God in a mode that is distinct from the way that the Father is God is clearly noted by the fact that the term the God (ho theos) is reserved for the Father, whereas the Word is simply God (theos): “In the beginning the Word was with the God, and the Word was God, in the beginning the Word was with the God” (John 1:1, literal translation from the Greek). The distinction between the Word and the God is also emphasized by the prepositional phrase with God or next to God—

pros ton theon. There is thus a very clear distinction between the Father as God and the Word as God, and yet both are God.\textsuperscript{58} However, the Son does not do his own will, but the will of his Father, the one who sent him. Though the Son has a will of his own, he subordinates it to the will of his Father, for the Father is "greater" than he (John 17:24; 4:34; 20:26). In turn, the Spirit or paraklētos is a separate divine personal being who is subordinate to the Son. Thus the Father is viewed as the generator and sender, as the source or font of divinity of the Son and the Spirit. The latter two may be fully divine persons, but they are derivatively so in dependence on the Father.

Yet the very subordination of wills that distinguishes the divine persons also unites them as one on a new level of existence. The Son does the will of the Father. The Spirit does the will of the Father and the Son. Though the wills of the Son and the Spirit are distinct from the Father's will—they could freely refuse to do his

\textsuperscript{58} Raymond E. Brown, \textit{The Gospel According to John I-XII}, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 1:24-25, comments:

The Prologue's "the Word was God" offers a difficulty because there is no article before theos. Does this imply that 'God' means less when predicated of the Word than it does when used as a name for the Father? Once again the reader must divest himself of a post-Nicene understanding of the vocabulary involved.

The N[ew] T[estament] does not predicate "God" of Jesus with any frequency... The reluctance to apply this designation to Jesus is understandable as part of the NT heritage from Judaism. For the Jews "God" meant the heavenly Father; and until a wider understanding of the term was reached, it could not be readily applied to Jesus.... In [John 1:1] the Johannine hymn is bordering on the usage of "god" for the Son, but by omitting the article it avoids any suggestion of personal identification of the Word with the Father. And for Gentile readers the line also avoids any suggestion that the Word was a second God in any Hellenistic sense.

There is further consideration.... Perhaps there is justification for seeing in the use of the anathoros theos something more humble than the use of ho theos for the Father. It is Jesus Christ who says in John xiv 28, "The Father is greater than I," and who in xvii 3 speaks of the Father as "the only true God." The recognition of a humble position for Jesus Christ in relation to the Father is not strange for early Christian hymns, for Philippians ii 6-7 speaks of Jesus as emptying himself and not clining to the form of God.
will—nevertheless, the Father’s will is done because they love him so completely. It is only because this distinction of wills exists that Jesus could say: “Not my will, but thine be done.”

The Father, Son, and Spirit are primordially united—a claim made in the gospel of John by use of the Greek words en and hen, i.e., in and one. The Father is said to be “in” the Son and the Son “in” the Father, and the Spirit is “in” them both and they “in” the Spirit. Because of this “in-ness,” or indwelling one-ness and loving unity, they act as one God. Indeed, if it were proper to identify an “essence” of God, that essence would not be the Platonic absolutes identified by Beckwith and Parrish; rather, that essence is love. God is love. That is the scriptural view—not the Neoplatonism assumed by Beckwith and Parrish.

Now for the astounding part. Mortals have been invited “into” this divine unity to be one just as the Father and Son are one: “neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:20-21). When mortals enter this relationship of divine unity, the scriptures are fairly clear that humans who are so united will share the same glory as the divine persons. As the Seventeenth Lecture on Faith succinctly put it:

The Lord said unto Moses, Leviticus xix. 2: “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.’” And Peter says, first epistle, i. 15, 16: ‘But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy.’” And the Savior says, Matthew v. 48: ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ If any should ask, why all these sayings? the answer is to be found from what is before quoted from John’s epistle, that when he (the Lord) shall appear, the saints will be like him; . . . for no being can enjoy his glory without
possessing his perfections and holiness, no more than they could reign in his kingdom without his power. 59

The Lectures concluded that if persons were invited to be one as the Father and Son are one, then they also share in the same glory enjoyed by the Father and the Son: “These teachings of the Savior most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation, and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them—that he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father.”60 The notion that persons can become like God is expressly stated in the scriptures (1 John 3:2). However, we must be careful to point out that humans can become “g o d s” only in a subordinate sense. The source or font of all glory and divinity is the Father. This glory is communicated to humans through the mediator. The revealer of this glory and the source of sanctification to become holy as the Father is holy is the Spirit.61

Thus it must be concluded that, biblically and historically, Mormons are justified in referring to a plurality of gods in the sense that there are distinct divine persons. They are also justified in concluding that the Bible teaches that persons can become like the Father and the Son in a very strong sense. The divine “likeness and image” can be communicated to persons by entering into a relationship of indwelling love and divine unity. In this sense, Mormons affirm a plurality of gods or of divine persons. The very notion was derived legitimately from the biblical record.

Mormons are also justified historically and biblically in asserting that there is only one God. First, God is used as the peculiar designator of the Father throughout the New Testament (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6). There is only one source of divinity, only one Father, only one God in that sense of God. Second, if God refers to some divine essence, to some set of properties necessary to be divine, then there is only one God or divine essence in that sense.

59 Lecture on Faith VII, 10, in N. B. Lundwall, comp., Discourses on the Holy Ghost; also, Lectures on Faith (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1959), 149.
60 Ibid., VII, 16, in ibid., 151.
There is only one *theotēs*, *divinitas*, or *deitas*, or one generic divinity or Godhead or Godhood *in that sense* (see Acts 17:29). If *God* is referred to in this sense then it must be used as a predicate adjective rather than a predicate nominative as Beckwith and Parrish use it. That is, the generic divine essence is a set of great-making properties severally necessary and jointly sufficient for their possessor to possess divinity. Each of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost has this essence, though none is simply identical with this essence as Beckwith and Parrish’s usage requires. Further, the New Testament teaches that persons can share in this essence or become like God (1 John 3:2). Finally, there is only one God *in the sense that* there is only one divine unity of persons or “Social Trinity.” There is only one divine family or community of divine persons in an indwelling relationship of perfect love. All of these senses are thoroughly biblical.

Beckwith and Parrish have played fast and loose with both biblical and Mormon ideas of unity and plurality of God(s). Their own view appears to be thoroughly incoherent unless they believe that the Father and the Son are somehow identical. But that view is certainly not biblical.

10. God’s Material Body

Finally, the authors argue that Mormons are wrong to view God as corporeal or embodied (pp. 114-16). However, one of the scriptures they cite to prove their point is very interesting: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). The authors should have asked themselves who was telling his disciples that he is no mere spirit. It is the resurrected Christ—the very embodied being whom Thomas called: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). It seems to me that this scripture supports the view that God is embodied—it certainly does not support the authors’ argument that God is incorporeal. This is the reason Mormons believe that God possesses a glorified body. The Son, who is the perfect image of the Father, was resurrected and ascended bodily into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). That Christ retained his resurrected body is indicated in the expectation that he will
return “in the same manner” that he “was taken up from you into heaven.”

The authors correctly argue that Mormons cannot cite Old Testament passages referring to God’s body to support the view that Yahweh possessed a glorified body (pp. 115–16). They argue that God is also said to take on the “form” of a dove, or to be a rock. Yet if these scriptures were taken literally in the way Mormons read references to God’s body, then we would have a strange God (p. 116).

However, the authors too hastily conclude that therefore God is “by nature [merely] spirit” (p. 116). These passages legitimately show that Israelites believed that God’s spirit has bodily form. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that spirit is somehow contrary to material states.

What distinguishes references to the human form of God from those comparing God to a rock or a mighty fortress is the consistency with which God reveals himself in human form. In a very sensitive discussion of “God in Human Form,” Terence Fretheim reviews the appearances of God in vision in the Old Testament and finds it striking that God always appears in human form.62 “The fact that the human form is constant throughout the literature gives it a level of significance beyond that of other empirical phenomena. It may be said that the human form says something not only about God, but also about the relationship between God and world/people.”63 Fretheim notes that it is a mistake to assume a discontinuity between spirit and materiality in Hebrew thought:

Is the human form one which God assumes for the sake of appearance; or is there an essential continuity between the form and God as God is, or both? It would

---

62 In Exodus 24:10, God appears and under his feet there is a work of sapphire. God ate and drank with Israel—implying a physical body; Amos 7:7 and 9:1 speak of God standing; Isaiah 6:1 says that Isaiah saw God sitting on a throne; Jeremiah 1:9 affirms that God “put forth his hand and touched [his] mouth”; in RSV Ezekiel 1:26, Ezekiel sees God seated above the “likeness of a throne, . . . a likeness as it were in human form”; RSV Numbers 12:8 tells of speaking “mouth to mouth” and of “the form of the Lord”; RSV Exodus 33:21–23 refers to the “place by” God, and to God’s hand and back. Acts 7:56 refers to Stephen’s vision of Christ “standing on the right hand of God.”

be a mistake to move to a consideration of God as spirit in this connection. It is remarkable how seldom the OT, and even the NT, uses such language to speak of God. . . . The spiritual and the physical/material are not mutually exclusive categories. To speak of God as spirit does not necessarily entail formlessness. 64

Thus Fretheim warns against the very assumption made by Beckwith and Parrish—i.e., that if God is spirit, then he cannot also have a material form. Yet Fretheim concludes that spirit is not exclusive from the physical/material in the Bible. Thus it is consistent to say that God, in the sense of an individual person, has “a body of spirit” (e.g., Ether 3:16). Indeed, David Paulsen has demonstrated that “spirit” was considered to be a species of material states in late antiquity. 65 Fretheim thus concludes:

While final clarity cannot be achieved on this point on the basis of the evidence we have, it is probable that Israel did not conceive of God in terms of formlessness, but rather that the human form of the divine appearances constituted an enfleshment which bore essential continuities with the form which God was believed to have. 66

I recommend Fretheim’s study to all readers—especially because his conclusions are directly contrary to the claims made by Beckwith and Parrish.

The fact that Israelites believed God had a human form is quite clearly set forth in Genesis 1:26: “God said ‘Let us make man in our image (demut); after our likeness (tselem).’” That this image and likeness refers to a genetic resemblance is made clear by Genesis 5:1, 3: “And Adam . . . begat a son in his own likeness (tselem), after his image (demut), and called his name Seth.”

However, it must be clarified that while God may have a bodily form, the individual divine persons are not essentially or

---

64 Ibid., 102.
necessarily corporeal in Mormon thought in the sense of “glorified, resurrected bodies.” For Yahweh was already fully God prior to mortal embodiment and resurrection. Further, the personage of the Holy Spirit is divine though as yet not embodied. Further, if “God” is used in the sense of the Godhead, then God in this sense does not possess a body in human form. However, if “God” refers to the Father or the Son, then the biblical record fully supports the Mormon view that God has a human bodily form—or more accurately, humans have bodies made after God’s image. God is not anthropomorphic; rather, persons are theomorphic.67

Conclusion

Surely Beckwith and Parrish are correct that the Mormon concept of God differs significantly from traditional views. However, their arguments to show that the Mormon view is inconsistent, logically unacceptable, and unbiblical are seriously flawed. Nevertheless, they have made a serious attempt to understand and articulate Mormon doctrines. Their arguments are not based on mere caricatures of Mormonism as is so common in anti-Mormon literature generally. They have attempted to fairly assess Mormon views and to elucidate philosophical objections from the evangelistic perspective.

Unfortunately, they have not been careful when dealing with canons and criteria of sound philosophical argumentation. They play fast and loose with biblical views. Indeed, their myopic scriptural fundamentalism leads them to serious errors in scriptural exegesis.

It is certainly time to assess and define Mormon thought with logical rigor. Perhaps their effort will force Mormons to be careful in the articulation of their own doctrines. However, I believe that Beckwith and Parrish’s book will merely further confuse the issues until a more able analysis comes along—I hope sometime in the near future.


Reviewed by Louis Midgley

F. M. Brodie—“The Fasting Hermit and Very Saint of Ignorance”: A Biographer and Her Legend

Oh, I had always wanted to write fiction.

F. M. Brodie

In any case, I started out not to write a biography of Joseph Smith but to write a short article on the sources of the Book of Mormon.

F. M. Brodie

I am quietly tearing my hair over the Book of Mormon again. Those chapters are the ones I have worked over the most and [they] are still the least satisfactory.

F. M. Brodie

---


1 Fawn M. Brodie, “Fawn McKay Brodie: An Oral History Interview,” *Dialogue* 14/2 (1981): 104. Hereafter cited as “An Oral History Interview.” This is a truncated, modified, and partially garbled version of Shirley E. Stephenson’s transcription of an interview, which is entitled “Biography of Fawn McKay Brodie,” California State University, Fullerton, 30 November 1975. In a later interview Brodie’s story had shifted somewhat; she granted that she “had always wanted to write fiction,” but then she claimed that she had “discovered after writing numerous short stories that this was not [her] forte.” Then she indicated that her husband had urged her “find out the roots and sources of what Joseph Smith’s ideas were.” That endeavor led to her writing her biography of Joseph Smith.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.
I was convinced before I ever began writing the book that Joseph Smith was not a true prophet.

F. M. Brodie

The historical magazines have not been too kind to me.

F. M. Brodie

Fawn McKay Brodie’s adroitly fashioned biography of Joseph Smith was released to the public on 22 November 1945—over fifty years ago. No Man Knows My History was republished as a paperback in 1995. This most recent appearance of Brodie’s book provides an occasion for a close look at the history of the controversy her work engendered. There are, I believe, important lessons to be learned from the debate, scholarly and otherwise, that has subsequently taken place over the soundness of her book. I will not examine in detail criticisms made by faithful Latter-day Saints, but will focus on the commentary about and subsequent debate over Brodie’s biography.

Launching the Legend

No Man Knows had, it seems, everything going for it: it was well written, it was the work of someone with roots in Mormonism (which always counts for much with the gentile audience), and it gave the appearance of having been written by one of genuine competence. It should be no surprise that it was met with instant and sustained praise from an array of literary gentlemen who reviewed it for newspapers and magazines. Alfred A. Knopf, the original publisher of No Man Knows, enthusiastically promoted it, even describing it as the “definitive” biography of Joseph Smith. Within months of its publication, the legend of

3 Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 26 April 1944, Dale L. Morgan Papers microfilm of the Bancroft holdings, manuscript roll 10, frame 62, Manuscript Division, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. Hereafter cited, by roll and frame, as Morgan Papers. I wish to thank Gary F. Novak for drawing my attention to this and other related items in the Morgan Papers.


5 Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 117.

6 Hereafter No Man Knows.
Brodie as biographer had been set in place. This myth has subsequently been kept alive on the fringes of the Mormon academic community, where it remains a key element of the unfaith of cultural Mormons and both secular and sectarian anti-Mormons. It is also alive and well with a gentile audience who seem to be uninformed, uncritical, and anxious for a plausible naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s prophetic charisms.

Brodie’s book was effectively marketed. When its respected national publisher sent prepublication copies to newspapers and news and literary magazines, it ensured that favorable reviews would begin appearing the day after its official release. By the end of 1945 at least eighteen reviews heaped praise on No Man Knows. These favorable reviews appeared in newspapers and magazines before the somewhat less enthusiastic comments of professional historians began appearing in academic journals. Latter-day Saints had virtually no way of reaching either the gentile or the academic audiences with their criticisms of Brodie’s book.

Early in January 1946, an interview with John Hutchens, a reporter for the New York Times, indicated that Brodie was annoyed that in the six weeks after its official release no newspaper in Salt Lake City had reviewed her book (however, no copies of No Man Knows were sent by its publisher to newspapers in Salt Lake City). At the same time she seemed pleased to report that No Man Knows had been described by RLDS President Israel Smith as “The Brodie Atrocity.”7 Brodie seems to have been anxious for similar reactions from leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Such criticism would have fueled controversy and thereby drawn additional lurid attention to her book, helping its sales among gentiles curious about Mormon things, and perhaps also among the Saints.

Brodie enjoyed the praise lavished on her even when it came from those who were clearly confused and uninformed. Those who lauded No Man Knows were eager to promote a nicely crafted

---

book that seemingly put Joseph Smith in his place. But it took months for the Saints to fashion their own substantive assessments of her work. Why? The Saints actually had to read and ponder the contents of her book and they also had to consult at least some of her sources.

The host of celebratory reviews by gentile literati and cultural Mormons may have contributed to the commercial success of Brodie's book. The first printing of No Man Knows consisted of 5,000 copies and was exhausted six weeks after publication. A second printing, containing corrections, as all subsequent printings did, was published in March 1945. The book has remained in print for over fifty years. The first edition sold over 1,200 copies a year, and was reprinted six times. It was eventually published in the United Kingdom. But a growing body of competent scholarship on the issues she raised, as well as forceful criticisms of her book, eventually obliged Brodie to issue a somewhat revised edition in 1971. The 1995 paperback version of No Man Knows reprints the 1971 revised edition without additional updating, and without mentioning the dated, problematic, or controversial claims it contains.

The quickly ensconced Brodie legend easily survived both the eventual appearance of a few reviews in academic journals that

---

8 Brodie received a $1250 advance on her book, and earned an additional $100 on the sales from the first printing. Much to her annoyance, she had $350 deducted from her earnings to pay for changes in the galleys. See Brodie to Morgan, 7 February 1946, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 143.

9 By October 1967, 28,843 copies of No Man Knows had been sold. See Ashby Green, managing editor at Knopf, to F. M. Brodie, 17 October 1969, Papers of Fawn McKay Brodie, roll 360, box 6, folder 1, Manuscripts Division, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. Hereafter cited as Brodie Papers. In 1977, Brodie told Judy Hallet, in an interview for KUTV of Salt Lake City, that No Man Knows "sells a modest amount every year, about 1,000 copies. . . . It never sold a great many copies in any single year. But it has had a steady sale from the beginning." Brodie thought that "about a half of the sales are in Utah and the rest scattered," with many being sold in southern California (rough transcript of Judy Hallet interview with F. M. Brodie, tape 2, page 3, Brodie Papers, box 1, folder 5). I suspect that many copies of No Man Knows are peddled by anti-Mormon zealots through their so-called "ministries," especially in Utah and southern California.

turned out to be less than fully laudatory or even critical of her work. Demonstrations by Latter-day Saints that her book was flawed seem to have done little to dislodge the legend from the minds of cultural Mormons, or in the eyes of sectarian and secular anti-Mormon critics of the Church.12

But No Man Knows was not universally well received, and criticism of her book annoyed Brodie. After three critical reviews by historians appeared in scholarly journals, Brodie wrote a letter in which she complained that “the historical magazines,” as she called them, “have not been too kind to me.”13 Her chief consolation for the failure of historians to embrace her book was that her close friend, Dale L. Morgan, an articulate cultural

---


12 For example, through their Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Sandra and Jerald Tanner, those sectarian anti-Mormon shadows of reality, regularly sell No Man Knows as part of their efforts to discredit Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.

13 Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 117.
Mormon archivist and student of Western Americana, lavished praise on her work. Given Morgan’s carefully crafted reputation as the leading “expert” on Mormon history, his endorsement of Brodie’s book seems to have been crucial.

When a prepublication copy of No Man Knows turned up at the Saturday Review of Literature, Morgan was asked to review it. His was the second review to appear in print. With glowing and appreciative language, Morgan thus introduced Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith to the gentile world. Yet he hinted that someone else would eventually do a better job of accounting for Joseph Smith in naturalistic terms, which was exactly what he intended but failed to do.

From 1943, when Brodie first met Morgan, until about 1951, when her interests turned in other directions, their relationship can best be described as symbiotic. An indication of Brodie’s dependence upon Morgan can be seen in her acknowledgments to No Man Knows. There she indicated that she had been particularly fortunate in having the friendly assistance of Mr. Dale L. Morgan, whose indefatigable scholarship in Mormon history has been an added spur to my own. He not only shared freely with me his superb library and manuscript files, but also went through the manuscript with painstaking care. He has been an exacting historian and a penetrating critic. (p. xiii.)

Morgan helped Brodie fashion No Man Knows. His influential review launched the Brodie legend. On 10 December 1945

---

15 This happened on 22 October 1945, one month before its official release.
16 Morgan had managed to persuade those on the fringes of the Church that he would eventually write the definitive history of Mormonism. On Morgan’s long and ultimately aborted effort to produce what he claimed would be that history, see Gary F. Novak, “‘The Most Convenient Form of Error’: Dale Morgan on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon,” FARMS Review of Books 8/1 (1996): 133–37.
18 The pages of the Saturday Review of Literature containing Morgan’s review in the Harold B. Lee Library (HBLL) at Brigham Young University are
Brodie wrote the following to Morgan: "I sent away for a dozen copies of the [Saturday Review of Literature] (which should tell you how proud I am of the review), and they arrived yesterday." 19

Brodie was elated and thrilled by Morgan’s glowing review of her book, even though she probably suspected that there might be a policy against having those she had thanked in the acknowledgments actually review her book. Morgan claimed that her book was splendid—both sympathetic and, of course, objective—even though she pictured Joseph Smith as a conscious fraud who later came to believe what she insisted were his constant lies and fabrications. Morgan was confident that Brodie had struck a powerful blow at the crucial historical sources, and consequently at the faith, of Latter-day Saints.

Living and Loving the Legend

Brodie does not seem to have given serious attention to criticisms of No Man Knows, whether they were published or provided to her in correspondence. Instead, she brushed all criticisms aside as the work either of apologists bent on resisting her artfully crafted naturalistic account of the Mormon past or of mere pedants bent on finding mistakes in her work. She steadfastly avoided engaging in a conversation with her Latter-day Saint critics either in public or in private. 20 The gentile literati and

nearly worn out. By contrast, the other reviews of Brodie’s book held by the HBLL seem not to have been used at all or to have been consulted much less frequently. The only other favorable review of No Man Knows that has drawn similar attention is Bernard DeVoto’s “The Case of the Prophet, Joseph Smith: First Dependable History of Mormonism Written from the Inside,” New York Herald Tribune, 16 December 1945 (Section VII, Weekly Book review for Sunday).

19 Brodie to Morgan, 10 December 1945, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 125.

20 Brodie was well aware of Hugh Nibley’s various criticisms of her work. In 1978 she wrote the following concerning him: “This man surely had a touch of genius, and a great linguistic talent. What a pity that he was emotionally trapped by his allegiance to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.” She then added: “What a pity that we never sat down and talked to each other.” F. M. Brodie to Everett Cooley, 23 August 1978, Brodie Papers, box 4, folder 6B. Nothing prevented her from dropping in on Nibley on one of her frequent visits to Provo and to the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. From
cultural Mormons\textsuperscript{21} who fawned over her book saw no reason to question her naturalistic explanation of Joseph Smith’s truth claims and were unable to identify the glaring mistakes that marred her book.\textsuperscript{22}

The serious reviews of Brodie’s book, including those written by Latter-day Saints as well as those in academic journals, began appearing months after its publication and hence after at least twenty-five salutary reviews had already been published in newspapers and popular magazines.

But Brodie was clearly aware of Latter-day Saint criticisms. Some criticisms of her book seem to have come to her in correspondence. For example, on 12 May 1946, in a letter to Dale Morgan, she indicated that one of the “younger generation” had written to her complaining about her treatment of the Book of

what I can find in her papers, she preferred conversations with those friendly to her views and avoided confrontations with those who might have disagreed with her.


\textsuperscript{22} Even the knowledgeable Morgan, for example, did not notice Brodie’s silly mistake of having the Lehi colony leave Jerusalem in “600 A.D.” in either of his readings of her manuscript or when he examined the prepublication copy sent to him by the Saturday Review of Literature. The other referees for No Man Knows, Milo Quaife, Wilford Poulson, and Dean Brimhall (her uncle), as well as the editors at Knopf, also failed to notice this and numerous other obvious mistakes, some but not all of which were corrected in later printings and in the revised edition. Poulson was sent a copy of her manuscript by the publisher by 26 October 1944. Knopf was also trying to get Bernard DeVoto to read Brodie’s manuscript. Brodie to Morgan, 26 October 1944, Morgan Papers, frame 89, roll 10. On 28 September 1944, Brodie indicated to Morgan that Dean Brimhall (her favorite uncle and well-known Mormon dissident) and Wilford Poulson (former BYU psychology professor and chronic critic of the Church) had agreed to read her manuscript. Brodie indicated that Poulson did not want his name to appear in the acknowledgments for her book. Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946.
BRODIE, NO MAN KNOWS MY HISTORY (MIDGLEY) 155

Mormon. Brodie was outraged by what I take to have been a letter from G. Homer Durham:23

Anyone who says that the Book of Mormon has "proved impregnable to attack" is either shamefully ignorant of the whole field of American Indian anthropology and archaeology and ethnology, or else has blockaded himself behind a lot of emotional barriers that no amount of documentation will ever break down.24

Still, Brodie granted that "Durham is no fool, nor is Widtsoe."25

But many other criticisms began to be published. Perhaps the most famous was Hugh Nibl ey's review essay entitled No Ma'am, That's Not History: A Brief Review of Mrs. Brodie's Reluctant Vindication of a Prophet She Seeks to Expose.26

Brodie was clearly eager to collect comments on her work, but she pouted when she discovered that most of the historians who reviewed No Man Knows were somewhat less than enthusiastic about her scholarship and were not lavish in their praise of her book, since they identified her background assumptions and biases, noticed significant mistakes, and so forth. Fawn Brodie explained to Morgan that her husband, prominent political scientist Bernard Brodie, comforted her by pointing to the favorable reviews and discounting criticism as the work of mere pedants.27

Publicly Brodie simply ignored criticisms from the Latter-day Saint community. In the face of criticisms from professional

23 Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946, Morgan Papers, frame 150, roll 10, p. 1. Elder Durham was then a young political scientist who taught first at the University of Utah, and who eventually became president of Arizona State University. Later he was Commissioner of Education in Utah, and finally a member of the Seventy and LDS Church Historian. No letter fitting the description Brodie provided is in the Brodie Papers. She may have destroyed the letter from Durham.
25 Ibid., 2.
26 The pamphlet was originally published in 1946 and reissued in 1959; it is now available in Nibl ey, Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass, 1-45.
27 Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 150. Brodie refers in her letter to Morgan to the review of her book in Time, 28 January 1946, which was glowing.
historians, she seems to have been somewhat consoled by what had already appeared in newspapers and literary magazines and especially by what her friends had written about her book. For example, she liked what Bernard DeVoto had written. From DeVoto’s perspective, only one who begins with a dogmatic rejection of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims could possibly tell his story.28 Brodie was therefore qualified, DeVoto claimed, to write what turns out to be, in his estimation at least, “the best book about the Mormons so far published.”29 On 22 December 1945, Morgan wrote to Brodie indicating that he was “glad that DeVoto wrote so warmly of your book. Indeed, I rejoice with you and for you for every success your book has.”30

But unlike Brodie, who relished DeVoto’s praise of her obvious literary gifts, Morgan was highly irritated by some of the language in DeVoto’s review. A somewhat hostile and quite interesting exchange of letters ensued between DeVoto and Morgan, and also with Brodie, over whether Joseph Smith was a conscious liar (that is, a religious impostor and charlatan)—the Morgan and Brodie stance—or a sincere person whose delusions could be explained only by picturing him as some sort of psychopath, which was the explanation advanced by DeVoto.31 Whatever the

28 DeVoto, “The Case of the Prophet.”
29 Ibid. DeVoto also described No Man Knows as “a brilliant and largely satisfying book.” He thought that she had “turned up a staggering amount of new material and much of it is conclusive; she has settled many questions and solved many mysteries for good.” DeVoto granted that “in the end everything else hinges on [Joseph Smith’s] visions, his revelations and his writings. Mrs. Brodie forthrightly rejects the explanation which all the Mormons have always accepted that they came from God, and explains them in purely mundane terms.” Despite or because of this, DeVoto claimed that Brodie manifested “the first requisite for the historian, profound sympathy for the Mormon people, and the other indispensable one, objectivity about their history” (ibid.).
31 Items below marked with an asterisk are available in Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism, 25–29, 84–119; see *Dale L. Morgan to Bernard DeVoto, 20 December 1945; *Morgan to Brodie, 22 December 1945; DeVoto to Brodie, 28 December 1945, Brodie to DeVoto, 29 December 1945; DeVoto to Brodie, 28 December 1945; DeVoto to Morgan, 2 January 1946; *Morgan to Brodie,
differences between DeVoto, Morgan, and Brodie on the question of what might constitute the most satisfactory naturalistic explanation of Joseph Smith and the most adequate assessment of the Book of Mormon, they situated themselves on the nonbelieving side of what Morgan liked to call the Great Divide, separating the accounts of nonbelievers from those of believers.32

However, at least by May 1946, Brodie focused on the positive language in DeVoto’s review and overlooked the differences between the stance she and Morgan shared on Joseph Smith, which pictured him as a sane person involved in conscious fraud, and DeVoto’s opinion that Joseph was a psychopath—what Morgan labeled “the paranoid thesis”33 in which the Book of Mormon had to be read as gibberish.34

The anonymous reviewer in Time, in whose praise Brodie indicates that she took some satisfaction, was rather typical of those who reviewed No Man Knows in newspapers and magazines. Other than Morgan, DeVoto, and Vardis Fisher, those who praised Brodie’s book had a hard time stating her position with any degree of precision.35 The reviewer for Time indicated that Brodie

7 January 1946; Morgan to Brodie, 28 January 1946. This correspondence can be found the box 6 of the Brodie Papers.

32 That is, at least from Morgan’s perspective, an essentially atheistic perspective. See Gary F. Novak, “Naturalistic Assumptions and the Book of Mormon,” BYU Studies 30/3 (1990): 24–30. Novak likes to quote the following from Dale Morgan: “With my point of view on God, I am incapable of accepting the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, be they however so convincing. If God does not exist, how can Joseph Smith’s story have any possible validity? I will look everywhere for explanations except to the ONE explanation that is the position of the church.” Novak, ibid., 25, quoting Morgan to Juanita Brooks, from Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism, 87.

33 Morgan thought that Brodie’s book was “essentially a refutation of the paranoid thesis.” See Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism, 92. However, in the supplement to the revised edition of her book, Brodie moved closer to DeVoto and somewhat away from Morgan by appropriating elements of a psychiatric explanation of Joseph Smith (see pp. 415–21; cf. xi).

34 See Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism, 93, for Morgan’s complaints about DeVoto’s highly negative evaluation of the Book of Mormon.

35 On 22 December 1945, Dale Morgan referred to “the three main reviews” of No Man Knows, in which class he included the reviews by Bernard DeVoto, Vardis Fisher, and the one he had written. There is no reason to believe that Morgan and Brodie later modified their estimation of who was best qualified to review No Man Knows.
had dealt with Joseph Smith with "skill and scholarship and admirable detachment." Furthermore, Brodie had seen in Joseph Smith's claims to divine revelation "an unanswerable instrument of power" over his presumably mindless followers. "Was he," this reviewer asks, "a shameless fraud or true prophet?" Thus, according to *Time*, Brodie had shown that he was "something of both." *Time* also felt that Brodie had shown that Joseph also "was an out-&-out impostor"—but "impostor Smith came close to being a prophet." Came close? Was that really Brodie's position? How could that have been the case, given her assumptions? Well, he "gradually hypnotized himself as well as others. He saw himself now as the true Moses." Hypnotized himself? Really? The *Time* review clearly garbled Brodie's explanation, as one might expect in a popular news magazine. But, as I will demonstrate, most of the favorable reviews of *No Man Knows* garble the explanation of Joseph Smith contained in that book. Other than the gratification from the flattering language about her literary gifts, most reviews of *No Man Knows* must have been an embarrassment to Brodie.

It hardly seems necessary to point out the rather typical confusion of details found in news magazines in what was clearly intended to be a highly favorable review. But the reviewer is not entirely at fault. Brodie is nothing if not difficult to adequately paraphrase. Her literary style, which reviewers regularly praise, allows subtle hints and innuendo to carry much of her plot and argument. In her effort to appear to be a somewhat sympathetic insider who is merely anxious to have the non-Mormon audience understand how it really was with Joseph Smith, she prepares her readers to accept just about any surmise they may wish to make, as long as they come to the conclusion that Mormonism is grounded on untruth. This, coupled with what might be called the fine literary quality of the book, may help explain the continuing popularity of *No Man Knows* among various secular critics of the restored gospel, but also among sectarian critics who do not seem to sense or who simply do not care that the assumptions at work in her explanation of Joseph Smith and Book of Mormon are at least

---

as imimical to their own brand of religiosity as they are to the faith of Latter-day Saints.37

Brodie seems not to have been interested in confronting and even less in learning from the critics of No Man Knows. Morgan thought that Brodie’s critics were not sufficiently well informed or were simply unable to face the facts as he understood them. Brodie tended to view her critics as something less than appropriately appreciative of the work that went into the production of No Man Knows, of her literary gifts, and of her liberation from the stultifying atmosphere of parochial Mormon culture.

**The Jefferson Debacle**

Until 1974, when Brodie published her psychobiography of Thomas Jefferson,38 her work as a biographer had not been exposed to careful analysis by competent gentile historians—that is, to the careful scrutiny of non-Mormon scholars who actually knew and cared something about the targets of her speculations.39 To that point in her career she had enjoyed at least a modest if not large reputation as a biographer. After all, her No Man Knows was widely and enthusiastically praised by literary individuals and cited and imitated by cultural Mormon critics of the Restoration. Thus, according to the Brodie legend, with her naturalistic explanation of Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims she had taken the measure of Joseph Smith.

Brodie’s *Thomas Jefferson* was a huge commercial success. Marketing through the Book-of-the-Month Club made it an instant bestseller. She describes her work on Jefferson as “an

---

37 Brodie had an interesting exchange with Monsignor Jerome Stoffel, a zealous anti-Mormon working in Utah. She had to explain to Stoffel that she disapproved of Roman Catholicism as much if not more than Mormonism and had no interest in getting Latter-day Saints to switch to some other brand of Christianity. See Brodie Papers, box 9, folder 3, for this correspondence.


intimate history” or what might now be called a psychobiography
of Jefferson. Much like the reception given No Man Knows,
Brodie’s account of Jefferson was immediately applauded by
those who knew little or nothing about the man or his times, but
who loved her efforts to “humanize” him with her extensive
speculations about his relationships with his parents, and especially
about his supposed sexual activities after the death of his wife.
Once again, much like the treatment given her No Man Knows by
gentile and Latter-day Saint historians, the experts on Jefferson
and his times tended to be critical of her treatment of Jefferson,
but only after the usual lag before these more detailed and much
less favorable reviews appeared in print. Hence her Thomas
Jefferson, much like No Man Knows, was eventually controversial,
and for similar reasons.

Some Latter-day Saints—and I was certainly one of them—
saw something of a belated vindication of criticisms Brodie got
from Latter-day Saints in the pounding she took from competent
historians over her biography of Jefferson. 40 So much for the ef-
forts of cultural Mormons to brush aside Nibley’s criticisms of
Brodie as flippant and sarcastic.

But in 1974 Brodie’s work was vigorously and thoroughly
probed and criticized by numerous professional historians both in
academic journals and in the popular press. Once again, much as
she did in 1946, she brushed aside these complaints. This time
criticisms were rejected as merely an effort by what Brodie deri-
sively labeled “the Jefferson Establishment” to protect his image,
just as she had discounted the criticisms of Latter-day Saints for
somewhat similar reasons.

“Humanizing” Jefferson

Brodie denied that she was “thin skinned” and insisted that
she was “really tough skinned about criticism. I’ve taken a little

thirty-one reviews of Brodie’s biography of Jefferson. These seemed at the time
to constitute a sufficiently large sample from which I could begin to generalize
about the reception Brodie’s Thomas Jefferson had received.
bit with the Jefferson book.”41 A little bit? She claimed that the
reviewers have mostly loved her “humanized,” warm, and pas-
sionate Jefferson. Brodie believed that she had

humanized Jefferson and reviewers have been very
kind to say this, I humanized Jefferson in a way no
other biographer had. He had emerged in the other bi-
oographies as a cold, austere man. I found him to be
neither cold nor austere. But a very warm man. And
there had been major secrets in his life, which he had
helped to hide and which his biographers also helped
to hide.42

Those supposed secrets involved, among other things, fathering
illegitimate children with a young quadroon slave girl who accom-
panied him and his daughter to Paris. Thus she devotes five chap-
ters and an appendix to the old tale about Jefferson’s supposed
“affair” with Sally Hemings.

How did Brodie’s immensely popular psychobiography fare
with the critics? What have competent reviewers said about her ef-
fort to humanize Jefferson, as she puts it, by looking “for feeling
as well as fact, for nuance and metaphor as well as idea and ac-
tion”?43 I have selected just a small sample of the criticisms about
the Jefferson book in order to provide some indication of how it
survived close scrutiny.

1. “Confident of her ability to divine truth,” one historian
noted,

Brodie brashly rushes into areas where others have
prudently proceeded with caution and restraint.
Employing a wide range of the most amateurish psy-
chological cliches, this excessively Freudian analysis
portrays Jefferson as a caricature beset with all the
emotional hangups known to man.44

41 Judy Hallet interview with F. M. Brodie, tape 1, page 6, box 1, folder
5, Brodie Papers.
42 Ibid., tape 2, page 2.
43 Brodie’s “Foreword,” Thomas Jefferson, 16.
Gerlach was trained at Rutgers, receiving his degree in 1968, and taught history
at the University of Utah at the time he wrote his review.
There is, this reviewer continues, "simply insufficient evidence to warrant her audacious analysis. So strained is the argumentation that Brodie often contends that the lack of evidence is evidence itself."\textsuperscript{45}

2. Cushing Strout described Brodie as the "mistress of the iffy sentence" because some of her crucial speculation "can be neither refuted nor proved."\textsuperscript{46} "Too often . . . her method collapses into farfetched, arbitrary reading between the lines."\textsuperscript{47} And finally Strout concludes that "Brodie’s treatment of the miscegenation issue will only confirm the skeptic’s complaint that psychohistory is nothing but a form of suppositional history."\textsuperscript{48}

3. T. Harry Williams, author of a 1969 Pulitzer-Prize-winning book on Huey Long, noted that Brodie gave only "scanty attention" to "some significant aspects of Jefferson’s public life,"\textsuperscript{49} because she focused her attention instead on Sally Hemings. Why? Brodie, according to Williams,

is looking always for the hidden meaning in Jefferson’s writings. Indeed, she seems to regard these records as a kind of cryptogram in which he sought consciously or unconsciously to conceal the secrets of his inner life. However, there are clues to the secrets, if one knows, as Mrs. Brodie does, how to decipher the code. One finds these clues in certain words or phrases that Jefferson used, "curious" words to Mrs. Brodie, that betray his innermost thoughts.\textsuperscript{50}

Williams then notes that

the content analysis goes on page after page as Mrs. Brodie finds example after example of Jefferson’s use of "curious" words, eventually becoming tedious and often ridiculous. She frequently mistakes the meaning

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Cushing Strout, \textit{Pacific Historical Review} 44/2 (May 1995): 266.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 267.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 526.
of a word, giving it a present instead of an eighteenth-century usage, and she discovers sexual references in nearly everything Jefferson wrote.\textit{51}

Where, one might wonder, did Brodie discover her method of reading texts? Williams explains that “the techniques Mrs. Brodie is talking about,” that presumably lay open Jefferson’s “inner life,” “are the tools of psychology and psychoanalysis put to historical service.”\textit{52} But, Williams notes, “for some reason she does not give these tools their ‘psycho’ label, nor does she admit that she is writing what has come to be called psychobiography, but this is the genre into which her book may be most conveniently fitted.”\textit{53}

But psychobiography, and its close cousin, psychohistory, after a brief period in which they were fashionable, have fallen on hard times. Though such methods were in vogue for a time, “professional historians have demonstrated a characteristic caution in adopting” psychobiography or psychohistory, the results of which “have as a whole been disappointing. . . . One of the problems of users of psychological techniques is that often they have to work from very scanty or indirect evidence to wring a generalization from thin sources.”\textit{54} Brodie was faced with exactly this problem in dealing with Jefferson—she was wont “to speculate at length,” according to Williams.\textit{55}

4. Garry Wills, also writing about Brodie’s psychobiographical treatment of Jefferson, indicated that “two vast things, each wondrous in itself, combine to make this book a prodigy—the author’s industry and her ignorance. One can only be so intricately wrong by deep study and long effort, enough to make Ms. Brodie the fasting hermit and very saint of ignorance.”\textit{56} Wills added that the “result has an eerie perfection, as if all the world’s

\textit{51} Ibid., 527.
\textit{52} Ibid., 524.
\textit{53} Ibid.
\textit{54} Ibid., 525.
\textit{55} Ibid.
greatest builders had agreed to rear, with infinite skill, the world’s ugliest building.”57

So it turns out that Hugh Nibley’s *No Ma’am, That’s Not History* is rather mild when compared with the reproaches directed against Brodie’s account of Jefferson by a host of competent historians.

**Playing a Numbers Game**

Nibley has drawn attention to the review by Garry Wills of Brodie’s *Thomas Jefferson*, as well as a review by David Donald titled “By Sex Obsessed.”58 Nibley compared the content of these reviews to some of his own earlier criticisms of *No Man Knows*. His remarks, written in 1974 and published in 1991, are comparable to Jerry Knudson’s more extensive, though still incomplete, review of reviews of Brodie’s book on Jefferson.59 Knudson came to conclusions roughly similar to those I had reached in 1979. Unfortunately, I was unaware of his study when I published my own. Knudson was able to examine a somewhat different sample of reviews of Brodie’s book than I had assembled.

---

57 Ibid. Wills and Brodie faced each other in a debate held at a “Town Meeting” at the Kennedy Center. For one view of what happened at this debate, see Mary McGrory, “Jefferson Lament: Author Writes Again,” *Washington Star*, 29 August 1975. Other materials, indicating the hostility she felt for Wills, can be found in the Brodie Papers, box 69, folder 10. Brodie appears to have been a good hater. See, for example, her indication in 1975, almost 30 years after Hugh Nibley first criticized *No Man Knows*, that she had long ago given up being angry at him for what he had written. Brodie to T. R. Tenney, 16 December 1975, the Brodie Papers, box 9, folder 6. But why was she angry? Academics should expect and even appreciate criticism. What is the point of being angry about a conversation flowing from the publication of one’s opinions? What happened to the open and honest pursuit of truth?

58 See Hugh W. Nibley, “A Note on F. M. Brodie,” in *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass*, 49–52. In this essay, drafted in 1974, Nibley cited Garry Wills from the *New York Review of Books* and David H. Donald, “By Sex Obsessed,” *Commentary* 58/1 (July 1974): 96–98. Wills is a controversial, widely published Northwestern University student of the period of the American Founding, including Jefferson, while Donald was Charles Warren Professor of American History at Harvard University.

He also concluded that professional historians tended to be critical of Brodie’s scholarship, while literary types tended to approve of her *Thomas Jefferson*. According to Knudson,

This new biography of Jefferson—although Brodie does not call it that—first coasted along on praise in about half of the reviews appearing in newspapers and magazines. Then it received condemnation in a number of scholarly journals. Thus, it offers a good opportunity to see what standards are used today in the popular press in reviewing new history books.\(^{60}\)

Knudson expressed concern that historical works, when they are reviewed in the popular press, tend to be turned over to those who are neither qualified nor motivated to hold them to appropriate standards. “How did Brodie’s book fare,” Knudson asked, with the reviews in the spring and summer of 1974 when it first came out? In a sample of 22 reviews (11 newspapers and 11 magazines other than scholarly journals) it was found that only five historians were assigned to review the book. Did they tend to accept Brodie’s evidence on the paternity matter? One did, four did not. Of other reviewers, nine did, eight did not. Why the difference?\(^{61}\)

Apparently, historians are more often inclined than reviewers to insist on cautious generalizations, solid arguments, careful weighing of sources and so forth. The nonhistorian reviewers tended to accept whatever Brodie had set forth, especially since it dealt with the alleged sexual activity of Jefferson after his wife died, and therefore had “humanized” him.

**Oh Really, Nineteen to One?**

Brodie was furious with Knudson. She could “think of no more absurd way to test the validity of historical evidence than by playing this kind of numbers game . . . , but,” she added, if “Mr.\(^{60}\) Ibid. 56.
\(^{61}\) Ibid.
Knudson wants to play it he should at least have asked for access to [her] publisher’s clipping file. Of the several score reviews that have come my way I can assure Mr. Knudson that the favorable outnumber the unfavorable by about 19 to 1.”62 Brodie was thus anxious to rebut Knudson by playing what she called “this kind of numbers game.” She claimed that Knudson was not only wrong about the reception given her book in general, but also about how it was received by historians.

Brodie is right in arguing that it is a mistake to assess what she calls “historical evidence” by playing a numbers game. However, Knudson addressed a different issue—he wanted to see if there was a correlation between the quality of the review and the professional qualifications of those who review historical books for the popular press. After examining the reviews of Brodie’s biography of Jefferson, he was able to locate a disparity between what historians and ordinary literary types are likely to say about such books. Hence, it is not clear that Knudson thought that he was assessing evidence, except indirectly, by counting favorable and unfavorable reviews of her book. Instead, he thought that the opinion of competent historians should count for more in assessing the quality of the scholarship that goes into the writings of historians than what one can rightly assume is merely the less well-informed opining by those clearly not competent in historical or methodological matters.

Knudson does not seem to have had access to the file of reviews assembled for W. W. Norton, Brodie’s publisher, nor in 1979 did I. But that file is now available in her papers at the Manuscript Division, University of Utah Marriott Library. It turns out that her claim that favorable reviews of her Thomas Jefferson

---

62 F. M. Brodie, “Professor Brodie Replies,” Journalism History 3/2 (1976): 59. Brodie seems to have told one interviewer that her *Thomas Jefferson* had been “pelted with reviewers’ bouquets along with at least one sizable brickbat” by Garry Wills, which, to say the least, “has unleashed a tempest of debate.” Eckman also reported that “most critics have buffed their superlatives for Mrs. Brodie but some hint her theories are at best fragile.” Wills, according to Eckman, “not only denigrated her scholarship but charged Mrs. Brodie with elevating a bedroom arrangement into a grand passion.” See Fern M. Eckman, “Fawn M. Brodie: Jefferson’s Secret,” Women in the News, New York Post, 27 April 1974.
"outnumber the unfavorable by about 19 to 1" is simply preposterous.

Even if we count as favorable the brief, unsigned item that appeared in *Parade Magazine*, a Sunday supplement, as 106 separate favorable reviews, and we add ten favorable reviews for each one that got syndicated in newspapers around the nation, we would triple the number of favorable reviews, but Brodie would still fall many hundreds short of coming up with a ratio of 19 to 1 favorable over unfavorable reviews.

Quite ironically Brodie overlooked several favorable reviews of her Jefferson book that she might have cited. She could, for example, have quoted from James T. Flexner, since he is well known as the biographer of George Washington and wrote a favorable review of her book. Or she could have substituted a reference to Max Lerner’s favorable review of her book in place of those advertising blurbs written by her friends. But the most egregious lacuna in her response was her failure to mention the names of those critical of her book. One senses selection (and distortion) going on in her response to Knudson.

Furthermore, Brodie’s claim about the 19 to 1 favorable reception given to her *Thomas Jefferson* by both reviewers in general and professional historians provides me with a wonderfully instructive opportunity to assess the way in which she deals with textual evidence.

I have now located 154 reviews of Brodie’s biography of Jefferson, which I have graded as favorable, mixed, or critical. If the mixed reviews, which are at least somewhat critical, are included with those that are flatly critical, 80 are in one degree or another unfavorable, while 74 are essentially favorable. It turns out that the bulk of the unfavorable reviews were written by historians, and the favorable reviews, which tended to appear in newspapers and news magazines, were written by literary types. The bulk of the unfavorable reviews were published in academic journals. It is also noteworthy that most of the favorable reviews appeared in print in the month after the official release of *Thomas

---

63 I have not included in my count some few reviews for which there is neither a publisher nor a date of publication indicated. These few items are typically very short—one brief paragraph—and unsigned. A chronological listing of these reviews is available by writing to me c/o FARMS.
Jefferson, while the unfavorable and most critical reviews were published later.  

One of Brodie’s claims was that historians generally liked her Thomas Jefferson. It is true that some historians were favorable and a few were enthusiastic in their support of her book. But most were in some degree critical, and many of those were devastating in their criticisms. Brodie had a response: “Since [Knudson] has chosen to single out quotations from the more hostile among those [reviews] he has seen and to avoid quoting the best from the non-hostile, let me by way of defense quote from some professional—and distinguished—historians.” She then quoted from one book review by a professional historian writing in a newspaper, and a review by her former student, James Banner, then an associate professor of history at Princeton. In addition, she padded her list of historians who praised her book by quoting advertising blurbs solicited at her request by her publisher from close family friends—Alexander and Juliette George—who are not historians, and Page Smith and Ray Billington, who are. Brodie neglected to point out that these people had not written book reviews. Instead, they had merely provided Brodie’s publisher with promotional hype for her book on preprinted cards sent with advance copies of her book.

---

64 In the month after its official release, that is, before 10 May 1974, 53 reviews of Thomas Jefferson were favorable, 27 were mixed and only 9 were critical. After May 10th only 21 reviews were favorable, while 11 were mixed and 44 were critical.

65 Brodie, “Professor Brodie Replies,” 59.


68 Alexander George is a student of international politics.

We are sending you this advance copy in our effort to increase the audience for this book. Your opinion could help in this effort and would be valued. Should you care to comment, this card, self-addressed and postage free, will serve your convenience.

Mrs. Brodie has written a splendid book. Conversant with depth psychology, superbly competent as a historian, she sifts through the data of Jefferson's life with marvellous sensitivity. The result is an object lesson in what psychobiography can accomplish: Mrs. Brodie brings Jefferson to life in the reader's mind.

The book is absorbing reading. Mrs. Brodie relishes history and her enthusiasm is infectious.

We salute her achievement.

We are sending you this advance copy in our effort to increase the audience for this book. Your opinion could help in this effort and would be valued. Should you care to comment, this card, self-addressed and postage free, will serve your convenience.

An extraordinary human drama told with great insight, compassion, and literary skill. What history should be but seldom is.

[Signatures and addresses]
I found Fawn Brodie's Jefferson thoroughly fascinating, opening vistas into Jefferson's life and thought that were fresh and exciting. A superbly written book, sparkling with new information and interpretations, and rich in its intimate understanding of a man who blended a large measure of virtues with a few very human foibles. Jefferson emerges with his halo still intact, but tilted a bit at a rakish angle. I found him even more understandable and even more likeable as a result.

The remote, withdrawn, even forbidding figure of Thomas Jefferson now exists in a human and recognizable dimension, thanks to Mrs. Brodie's finely shaded portrait of him. Her new book is a remarkable achievement in deduction as well as in biographical interpretation and narrative. I'm grateful to you for sending me a copy.

Justin Kaplan
Readers should be able to judge for themselves the efficacy of Brodie’s citing, without explanation, some advertising blurbs provided by her friends for W. W. Norton, her publisher.

**Manipulation and Selection, or “The Pieces . . . Take on a Life of their Own”**

When Brodie was questioned about how her biographies of Joseph Smith and Thomas Jefferson were fashioned, she had a fanciful explanation. She explained in 1977 that “you do the research first. You amass all the data. And it manages—some of it just manages to float into place by itself, almost by itself.”

She explained that “you build up a mosaic as a biographer, from multitudes of small pieces that you find in as many places as you can. You don’t invent anything; you just assemble the pieces together and sometimes, as I say, they take on a life of their own.”

But the idea of pieces floating together all by themselves, without the historian (or biographer) having much of anything to contribute to the process, is extraordinarily naive. Brodie knew that she was spouting nonsense. The historian, not the texts, provides the plot. These are mined by the historian to flesh out the explanation being advanced. Brodie knew this to be true, for in 1970 she wrote the following comment on what historians must necessarily do when they try to write about the past:

> The writing of history is clearly an act of manipulation. It has to be, for the past is too vast, too full of an unimaginable number of details to be dealt with except by simplification. . . . Even the most dispassionate historian, trying to select fairly, with intelligence and discretion, manipulates in spite of himself, by nuances, by repudiation, by omission, by unconscious affection or hostility. The good historian leaves a well blazoned trail

---

70 Judy Hallet’s interview of F. M. Brodie, tape 1, page 5, box 1, folder 6, Brodie Papers.
71 Ibid., tape 1, pages 4–5.
72 Ibid., tape 1, page 5.
of footnotes so that anyone can go back to his sources.73

However, Brodie, in her response to Knudson, does not leave a trail of footnotes indicating that she had, for example, drawn upon advertising blurbs written by close personal friends. In her essay entitled "Can We Manipulate the Past?" she provided no footnotes whatsoever, and she was certainly manipulating the textual materials in an effort to defend herself against what she considered unfair criticism. Brodie seems to have wanted desperately to make it appear as though historians liked her Thomas Jefferson—that was the way she told her story. But she complained that "Mr. Knudson picks and chooses among the evidence as he picks and chooses among the reviews."74 Clearly she also did some selecting and hence was manipulating by intentionally omitting evidence that historians had been critical of her work.75

Well, so Brodie manipulated in this case. So what? Had she not admitted that "all historians manipulate by virtue of the selection of the material. 'Manipulation' is," she granted, "a nasty word. The good historian tries not to manipulate deliberately but to let the material shape itself."76 Now we are back with her mythology about the pieces just somehow floating into place as they take on a life of their own. She once indicated that she had found,

73 F. M. Brodie, "Can We Manipulate the Past?" (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1970), 4. This is the published version of the First Annual "American West Lecture," read at the Hotel Utah, Salt Lake City, 3 October 1970.
74 Brodie, "Professor Brodie Replies," 60.
75 Since Brodie neglected to mention even the names of those distinguished experts on Jefferson and many other professional historians and other academics who published unfavorable reviews of her Thomas Jefferson, I will provide such a listing: Lois W. Banner, Max Bellof, John B. Boles, Paul F. Boller Jr., Henry W. Bragdon, John M. Cooper Jr., Virginia Dabney, Jutes Davids, David H. Donald, Michael Fellman, Alvin S. Felzenberg, F. J. Gallagher, Larry R. Gerlach, Holman Hamilton, Steven H. Hoekman, Reginald Horsman, Winthrop D. Jordan, Michael Kammen, Mary-Jo Kline, Jerry Knudson, Jon Kukla, Dumas Malone, Bruce Mazlish, Max M. Mintz, Richard Morris, Frederick I. Olson, John Pancake, Robert Rutland, Robert Spiller, Cushing Strout, Thad W. Tate, G. E. Watson, John Watterson, T. Harry Williams, Garry Wills, and Benjamin F. Wright.
especially with the Joseph Smith book, something fascinating. I was working with non-Mormon, anti-Mormon, and Mormon material and I would get three different versions of the same episode—always two, sometimes three—and when I put them together a picture emerged that I believe had nothing to do with me, nothing to do with my selection. I was just putting all the versions together and then, as I say, it was a little like building a mosaic: you don’t create the materials, the materials are there. But somehow they fell into place, partly like a jigsaw and partly like a mosaic. It was not totally mosaic, it was a combination. It was not totally jigsaw either, but a picture emerged so often as I wrote these chapters that I thought this must be the way it happened.77

This is just nonsense. Brodie started out intending “to do a small piece on the sources of the Book of Mormon.”78 But what she considered sources for that book were entirely nineteenth-century and hence her intention was from the beginning to show that the Book of Mormon is what she calls “frontier fiction” (p. 67) and therefore fraudulent. She would allow nothing to get in the way of her bias. Why? She was convinced before she “ever began writing the book that Joseph Smith was not a true prophet.”79

“The Mistress of the Iffy Sentence”80

Brodie began with the assumption that Joseph Smith fashioned the Book of Mormon out of his immediate environment; he was attempting to fashion a history of the so-called Moundbuilders (pp. 34–36, cf. 19). “The mystery of the Moundbuilders attracted no one more than Joseph Smith,” according to Brodie (p. 35).

77 Ibid., 107.
78 Judy Hallet’s interview with F. M. Brodie, tape 1, page 4, box 1, folder 6, Brodie Papers. Cf. “An Oral History Interview,” 104, where she indicated that she started out “to write a short article on the sources of the Book of Mormon.”
80 Cushing Strout, in the Pacific Historical Review, 266.
[Hence] some time between 1820 and 1827 it occurred to the youth that he might try to write a history of the Moundbuilders, a book that would answer the questions of every farmer with a mound in his pasture. [Joseph Smith] would not be content with the cheap trickery of the conjurer [Luman] Walters, with his fake record of Indian treasure, although he might perhaps pretend to have found an ancient document or metal engraving in his digging expeditions. Somewhere he had heard that a history of the Indians had been found in Canada at the base of a hollow tree. (p. 35)

She also claimed that Joseph started his career as a money-digger and only later got the idea of claiming to have found some gold plates; the idea of an ancient prophetic history written on those plates was a latter invention, since he initially started out to write an essentially secular history of the ancient aboriginal peoples in the immediate vicinity of Palmyra (pp. 19, 36–37).

It was at that point, according to Brodie, that young Joseph Smith hit upon the idea that he could use this history of the Moundbuilders to found a "church" by turning it into a religious text and himself into a "prophet." All of this is supported by an array of suppositions cast in the form of "it may have struck him" (p. 37) or "it might have been" (p. 36), or "perhaps Joseph speculated" (p. 36). It was only later, she surmised, that Joseph Smith more or less came to believe the story that he told and the book that he had written.

After Brodie had created her interpretation of the sources for the Book of Mormon, she faced what she describes as "the much more difficult problem [of] trying to understand the man who put it all together in this extraordinary fashion and wrote a book that convinced so many people for many years that it was truly a revelation or at any rate was divinely inspired."81 She found that she "had to write a whole book to resolve the questions" in her mind about Joseph Smith. Having done that, she "was able to describe it, summarize it pretty much in the introduction."82 Brodie complained that "some people say I wrote the introduction first

82 Ibid.
and then tried to prove what I said. No, the introduction is always the last thing . . . you write."\textsuperscript{83} Well, of course it is. But the background assumptions, the speculations, the categories, and the theories that are at work throughout her study fuel the explanations set forth in her books. These are then made more or less explicit in the introduction.

When the kind of unconscionable speculation that Latter-day Saint critics found in \textit{No Man Knows} turned up in Brodie's intimate treatment of Jefferson, knowledgeable historians objected. For example, Garry Wills protested against what he called "Ms. Brodie's hint and run method,"\textsuperscript{84} by which he meant her proclivity "to ask a rhetorical question, and then proceed on the assumption that it has been settled in her favor, making the first surmise a basis for second and third ones, in a towering rickety structure of unsupported conjecture."\textsuperscript{85} Another historian charged her with building her account on a flimsy "web of circumstance."\textsuperscript{86} This same historian noticed that she was deeply enmeshed in what one called "the shifting sands of speculation," while others complained of her "heroic feats of misunderstanding,"\textsuperscript{87} or of her penchant for "applying intuition to scholarship."\textsuperscript{88} But when she offered her account of Joseph Smith, most of these weaknesses were overlooked by gentle critics.

**Tidying up Some Embarrassing "Historical Slips"**\textsuperscript{89}

In her "Supplement" to the 1971 edition of \textit{No Man Knows} Brodie moved away from the stance that both she and Dale Morgan had adopted in the early 40s concerning early events in the life of Joseph Smith. For example, she initially claimed that it

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Wills, "Uncle Thomas's Cabin," 26.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{87} Wills, "Uncle Thomas's Cabin," 28.
\textsuperscript{88} Alan Green, "The Inner Man of Monticello," \textit{Saturday Review/World} 1 (6 April 1974): 23.
\textsuperscript{89} Richard B. Morris, "The Very Private Jefferson," \textit{New Leader} (27 May 1974): 25, called attention to numerous "historical slips" in Brodie's biography of Jefferson. \textit{No Man Knows} was larded with many similar slips.
was no sooner than 1838 that Joseph Smith embellished his own story of being called as a “prophet” with a tale of an initial youthful encounter with deity. On that matter both Brodie and Morgan turned out to be wrong. But unlike Morgan, who never had to face the consequences of their mistaken conjecture, Brodie had to adjust her explanation to fit solid textual evidence that flatly refuted her earlier assertions about the First Vision.

When Brodie published her book and for years afterwards, she insisted that Joseph Smith started his career as a conscious fraud, a trickster—a village scryer—who only later inadvertently drifted into religious imposture when he fashioned a “Golden Bible”—the Book of Mormon—as a kind of substitute for the treasures he had previously sought as part of a band of Palmyra “money-diggers.” By 1971, without having abandoned much of her initial explanation, Brodie turned to other explanations of Joseph Smith drawn more or less from the literature on abnormal psychology. However, in 1945, following the lead of Dale Morgan, she flatly eschewed psychological explanations that in any way blunted her (and his) theory that Joseph Smith was a conscious fraud and hence knew exactly what he was doing when he wrote the Book of Mormon.90

On 24 March 1945, seven months before its publication, Brodie described to Dale Morgan how she was finding all kinds of errors in the galleys for No Man Knows.91 But her work on those galleys seems to have been inept, for there were numerous

90 Brodie attacked the Spalding-Rigdon explanation of the Book of Mormon that had dominated anti-Mormon and gentile literature of Joseph Smith from 1834 to 1945. With only a few exceptions, most writers attempting a naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon during this period had turned to one or another version of the so-called Spalding Theory. In this explanation, crafted after the initial Smith Theory (that Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon) had proved untenable, it was argued that the Book of Mormon simply could not have been written by Joseph Smith. Someone other than Joseph, someone very familiar with the Bible and also with religious controversies and history, had to have done it. The one who supposedly wrote the Book of Mormon was Sidney Rigdon. But Rigdon also needed help, which he got from a lost manuscript for a romance written many years earlier by Solomon Spalding. That the historical portions of the Book of Mormon, including its cast of characters, were based on a novel written by Spalding became the received opinion among anti-Mormons beginning in 1834 until 1945.

91 Brodie to Morgan, 24 March 1945, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 106.
mistakes she did not correct, some of which were obvious. Hence, when Brodie finally published her revised “edition” of *No Man Knows* in 1971, in addition to a twenty-one page “Supplement” (pp. 405–25), she indicated that “this edition contains certain significant additions . . . woven into the original [text] in a fashion that permits the pagination to remain unchanged. A few specific details shown to be inaccurate by new discoveries have been deleted” (p. xi). In the 1971 “Supplement” to *No Man Knows*, she also acknowledged that she had “tried in successive printings [of the first edition] to edit out small factual errors as they were pointed out. . . . Hopefully, this edition will see the elimination of almost all of them. Of course,” Brodie then added, she had “not changed everything declared to be an error by critics.” She considered “many of these criticisms subjective, interpretive, and often altogether inaccurate” (p. xii). She thereby seems to have admitted that some of her earlier claims or explanations had to be abandoned or at least altered.

One change made by Brodie in 1971 deserves special attention. As I have indicated, Brodie modified her earlier assertion that Joseph Smith had invented, no earlier than 1838, what has eventually come to be known as the First Vision. Her original thesis was that Joseph Smith had evolved from being merely a village scryer into a “prophet” and hence later read back into his past, charismatic special revelations, including the First Vision. But in 1971, even though some of her more dramatic supporting claims had to be radically modified, Brodie did not entirely abandon her original controlling thesis. Her claim that Joseph Smith simply invented the First Vision in 1838 had to be altered because considerable evidence had been uncovered showing that Joseph Smith had both told others of his first theophany, and had even begun dictating to scribes very brief, fragmentary accounts of that initial encounter with deity beginning at least in 1832. Because this was not known in 1945, Brodie’s initial treatment of the First Vision had stunned Latter-day Saints.

By 1945 the Saints were in the habit of seeing what has come to be called the First Vision, rather than the later encounters with

---

92 Unfortunately, she neglected to identify these criticisms or otherwise argue the issues raised by her critics.
an angel and the subsequent coming forth of the Book of Mormon, as the central or key event of the Restoration. They more or less assumed that the earliest Saints shared all the details of their own understanding of the Restoration. Hence Brodie’s original claim that until Joseph Smith began dictating his history in 1838 the earliest Saints were entirely unaware of the First Vision came as something of a shock.

An indication of the bewilderment Brodie’s original claims generated among Latter-day Saints can be seen in remarks in a letter to her by Dale Morgan, her cultural Mormon friend, who among other things shared her explanation of the First Vision. In a letter to Brodie in 1949, Morgan indicated that he had permitted Francis Kirkham, a Latter-day Saint apologist, to inspect his collection of items from “the contemporary newspapers and religious press, and,” Morgan noted, Kirkham “was struck with the fact that the First Vision was on vacation or something.”93 Morgan boasted that he had challenged Kirkham to discover, if he could, “whether anything at all can be found in contemporary Mormon diaries to support the First Vision, etc.” He also indicated to Brodie that Elder John A. Widtsoe had written to him “asking for any pro and con references bearing on the question of whether the First Vision was invented in 1838. I replied,” he claimed, “that there was absolutely no evidence for it before 1840.”94 There were, of course, texts containing descriptions of Joseph’s early theophany in the LDS archives, but these texts were then unknown to both the Saints and their critics.

The Recent Conversation over Brodie’s Scholarship

In 1978 Thomas G. Alexander claimed that in Mormon circles “perhaps no book in recent times has evinced more comment” than Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith.95 If by

93 See Morgan to Brodie, 8 September 1949, in Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism, 175.
94 Ibid.
“evinced” Alexander\(^9^6\) meant something like “generated” or “produced,” rather than to “make evident,” his assessment was then true. However, it is no longer true. The publication by Signature Books, beginning in 1990, of collections of revisionist essays on the Book of Mormon has engendered a literature that exceeds, in both volume and quality, critical scholarly commentary that was devoted to *No Man Knows*. Four or five essays included in a collection edited by Dan Vogel entitled *The Word of God*,\(^9^7\) and Brent Metcalfe’s collection entitled *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*,\(^9^8\) without ever mentioning *No Man Knows*, follow Brodie’s lead by attempting to read the Book of Mormon as “frontier fiction” (p. 67),\(^9^9\) inspiring or otherwise. Signature Books seems to be eager to promote attempts to read the Book of Mormon as a fantasy fabricated by Joseph Smith “from and reflecting frontier events and thought,”\(^1^0^0\) or as his youthful psychodrama, and hence not as an authentic ancient history.

In 1975 Brodie reported that her biography of Joseph Smith was the product of her initial desire to write an essay setting forth

\(^{9^6}\) Alexander is an authority on some aspects of the American West.


\(^{1^0^0}\) Language used by Knopf in the description of *No Man Knows* that appeared in the American Library Association’s *The Booklist: A Guide to Current Books* 42/8 (1 January 1946): 147.
a secular, naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon. The recent spate of efforts by cultural Mormons to fashion similar secular, naturalistic accounts can be read as a recognition by contemporary critics of the Book of Mormon that she failed to achieve her primary goal. However, recent revisionist endeavors by Vogel and Metcalfe can also be seen as a continuation and modification of Brodie’s attempt to provide a plausible naturalistic account of the Book of Mormon in which Joseph Smith is pictured, among other things, as its author and hence as a fraud, pious or otherwise.

Though Brodie’s literary skill is obvious and has been widely acknowledged, even or especially by her many detractors, her background assumptions, mode of argument, coherence, and scholarship have often been challenged; her treatment of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon has also been shown to be thoroughly flawed. Criticisms of Brodie trouble some gentile critics of the Restored Gospel, though they may, as I will show, grant that these criticisms are warranted. For example, after describing Brodie as “still Joseph Smith’s great biographer despite Mormon anger at her work,” the redoubtable Harold Bloom—a contemporary literary-cum-religious critic—in 1992 quoted her conclusion that

Joseph had a ranging fancy, a revolutionary vigor, and a genius for improvisation, and what he could mold with these he made well. With them he created a book and a religion, but he could not create a truly spiritual content for that religion. He could canalize aspirations

formed elsewhere into a new structure and provide the ritualistic shell of new observances. But within the dogma of the church there is no new Sermon on the Mount, no new saga of redemption, nothing for which Joseph himself might stand. His martyrdom was a chance event, wholly incidental to the creed that he created. (p. 403)103

Bloom describes this essentially concluding passage from No Man Knows My History as an example of what he considers “religious criticism.” Despite or perhaps because of what Brodie claimed as the utter barrenness of Joseph Smith’s “spiritual legacy,” Bloom granted that her assessment is “inadequate.” Why? Because it is somehow unfair to set up the Sermon on the Mount as the standard by which one will judge the legacy of Joseph Smith? Not exactly. He also granted that she “summed up the prophet’s spiritual achievement a touch too harshly.”104 Picturing Joseph Smith as an intentional fraud is just a touch too harsh a judgment? Since Bloom asserts “that all religion is a kind of spilled poetry, bad and good,”105 the ground for “religious criticism” is for him the critical assessment of artistic achievement by one who is presumably competent to make such judgments. Presumably only someone like Bloom—one qualified to adequately assess poetic creativity—can determine when poetic imagination is really present in “religion” and who can thereby also determine in what ways it is being “spilled.”

Bloom suspects that it is therefore impossible for a faithful Latter-day Saint to function as genuine religious critic, since to a Mormon the Pearl of Great Price is as canonical as the New Testament. But only a handful or two of Mormons, past or present, have been authentic religious critics of their own faith, and most of those

104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
have been expelled by the church (like Mrs. Brodie) or departed on their own.  

Bloom finds Brodie’s “religious criticism” inadequate in some crucial ways. Yet he still thinks that she was right about one thing, for she “saw the truth when she beheld the religion of her ancestors as having the same relation to Christianity that Christianity had to Judaism, or that Islam had to both the religion of the Book and the religion of the Son of Man.”  

This opinion takes us no further than has Jan Shipps, who grounded her notion that Mormonism was “a new religious tradition,” and hence neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic, on a rather breezy remark by Brodie.  

To see what might be done with the thesis borrowed by Shipps from Brodie and then elaborated, as she points out, with different details, “since her sustained argument does not follow the lines of Fawn M. Brodie’s work,” one only has to note what Bloom did with what we may label the Shipps hypothesis. Bloom argues that in the “corporately structured LDS church ... Jesus becomes pragmatically unnecessary in the work of salvation.”  

The Saints thereby deny the necessity of the atonement wrought by the Christ—Jesus of Nazareth.  

Bloom thus describes Shipps as “the most sympathetic gentile scholar of Mormonism,” and then notes that “Mormonism, as Shipps clearly conveys, is no more a kind of Christianity than Islam is.”  

Thus, despite the tendency of some Latter-day Saints to find reassurance in some of the earlier accounts of Latter-day Saint beliefs offered from time to time by Shipps, some of her carefully worded and somewhat ambiguous formulations have not been entirely consonant with faith or have been easily misread.
even or especially by very bright gentile readers like Harold Bloom. The Saints, it must be emphasized, have always thought that they were involved in what amounts to a genuine restoration of ancient things—they are "new" only in the sense that they have not been around for a while in their fullness.

Put bluntly, if Mormonism is a genuinely new religious tradition, as the Shipps hypothesis seems to claim, the Saints simply do not have access to what they believe is an authentic restoration of the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is exactly the point that Brodie was eager to make by offering her secular, naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon.

The Morgan-Myth: Breathing Life Back into the Legend

If most of those so-called Mormons involved in what Harold Bloom portrays as "religious criticism" have been "expelled by the church . . . or departed on their own," what stance have these critics of the Restoration taken on No Man Knows? At least some of these critics have been fond of Brodie's book, since it has provided a convenient peg upon which to hang their unbelief. It should therefore not be surprising that those whom Bloom describes as "religious critics" have tended to be highly scornful of criticisms of Brodie and some of them have striven in one way or another to refurbish and perpetuate her scholarly reputation. But the number, variety, and competence of the criticisms of No Man Knows from within the Mormon intellectual community have made it troublesome for cultural Mormon critics of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon to make much open use of Brodie's book in their polemics. Critics of the Book of Mormon have therefore moved in two directions.

First, since the sources Joseph Smith employed in fashioning his "frontier fiction" are, according to Brodie, "absolutely American" (p. 67), cultural Mormon critics of the Book of Mormon have striven to uncover all its entirely nineteenth-century sources. Hence, one of their tactics has been to ignore Brodie's book, at least in public, while working on the assumption that she was correct in claiming that "painstaking research can uncover the sources of all its ideas" (p. 67).
Second, other apologists for Brodie have directly attempted to rescue her from the opprobrium into which she has fallen among knowledgeable Latter-day Saints. Instances of this tactic can be seen in recent efforts to defend Brodie’s scholarly reputation by lionizing Dale Morgan—the one who provided her with bibliographical and other technical assistance in fashioning her biography of Joseph Smith. Dale Morgan read and commented on the manuscript for *No Man Knows* at least twice. Her manuscript, as far as I have been able to determine, was also read by two others—Milo Quaife and M. Wilford Poulson. Quaife may have been a referee selected by Brodie’s publisher. Poulson seems to have been asked to read the manuscript version of *No Man Knows* by Brodie. Morgan’s correspondence reveals that he provided her with bibliographic assistance and warned her of the responses to her book that were likely to come from faithful Latter-day Saints. In addition, as I have shown, Morgan helped launch her book with a glowing review that appeared just two days after its official release in the winter of 1945.

The initial effort to vindicate Brodie by drawing attention to the assistance provided her by Morgan came with the publication by Signature Books of a brief selection of his extensive correspondence and also the unfinished drafts of the initial chapters of what he hoped would be a definitive three-volume history of Mormonism. He worked on this history for seventeen years,

---

113 John P. Walker’s “Introduction” to *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism* provides a fine example.
114 Quaife was a literary figure who dabbled in Western Americana.
115 M. Wilford Poulson taught psychology at Brigham Young University for many years. He was famous for debunking the faith of his Latter-day Saint students. Much of his energy was devoted to collecting materials on the Mormon past. He did not, however, publish on Mormon history or on the prophetic truth claims of Joseph Smith, though he was a critic of both. Still, both Morgan and Brodie were suspicious that Poulson might still harbor some sentimental links to his Mormon past that might color his judgment.
117 See Morgan’s “A Prophet and His Legend.”
118 For the details, see Novak, “‘Most Convenient Form of Error,’” 126, 133–37.
but eventually abandoned his effort. Both Morgan and Brodie have their devoted followers on the fringes of the Mormon academic community, and even among a few gentiles interested in Latter-day Saints.

For example, Clare Dobay, a non-Mormon who wrote a dissertation in 1980 assessing recent historiographical controversies, argued in 1994 that back in the 1980s "the individual scholar’s predisposition toward religion” grounded what she sees as the current polarization over the Mormon past. “Authors with a more skeptical intellectual attitude toward religious experiences,” according to Dobay, “were more apt to agree with anti-Mormons in seeking naturalistic explanations of [Joseph] Smith’s career.” The spate of revisionist essays recently published by Signature Books (along with some essays that have appeared in Dialogue and Sunstone) seems to support her contention.

Dobay traces the recent flowering of naturalistic explanations of the Book of Mormon (and Joseph Smith’s prophetic charisms) back to the earlier opining of Brodie and Morgan. From Dobay’s perspective,

119 See Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism, 219-400, for the published version of Morgan’s seventeen-year effort to write the definitive history of Mormonism.
121 Clare V. Dobay, “Essays in Mormon Historiography” (Ph.D diss., University of Houston, 1980).
122 Clare V. Dobay, “Intellect and Faith: The Controversy over Revisionist Mormon History,” Dialogue 27/1 (1994): 104. I have not focused on Cragun, who is a much better example of one who essentially sees the world through the eyes of Brodie and Morgan. Unlike Dobay, Cragun’s opinions are accessible only in an unpublished dissertation, while Dobay’s have been published.
123 Ibid.
Fawn Brodie and Dale Morgan provide the best examples of this category. Morgan’s portrait of [Joseph] Smith as a talented youth who stumbled into his religious role by accident, then evolved in it to the point of believing himself a prophet, was close to Brodie’s. The appearance of his unfinished work on early Mormonism in 1985, though a product of an earlier era, represented a significant contribution to [the study of] early Mormon history.  

Dobay thus has a rather sanguine view of the current work of Mormon historians, both gentile and Latter-day Saint. Similar to Robert B. Flanders, a former RLDS historian who in 1974 popularized the vague, amorphous, and unfortunate label “New Mormon History,” Dobay holds that

Of all the transitional works usually mentioned as bridges between the old Mormon history and the new, Brodie’s naturalistic study of Joseph Smith[,] by raising questions regarding the prophet’s credibility and the religious context of his work[,] touched the rawest nerve in Mormon historiography.

Likewise, I must point out that criticisms of Brodie-like explanations of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon seem to touch a raw nerve in cultural Mormon as well as anti-Mormon historiography.

**RLDS “Liberals” Embrace Brodie . . .**

The initial RLDS reaction to the publication of *No Man Knows* can best be described as venomous. But since the sixties there has been a takeover of the Reorganization by a faction anxious to

---

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid., 104–5.
downplay the traditional links with what is now considered an embarrassing parochial past. These “liberals” are anxious to transform the Reorganization into something like a liberal Protestant “church” or even into a “peace movement.” It has been common for at least some of the more bold RLDS “liberals”—if that is the appropriate label—to celebrate Brodie’s book.

For example, Bill Russell, one of the more vociferous RLDS “liberals,” claimed in 1972 that “Mormon historians owe a great debt to Mrs. Brodie, one which it is time we acknowledged.” He granted that “even among the more scholarly Mormons, it has been popular to claim that while Mrs. Brodie uncovered much new information, her biases distorted her ability to put it all together.” However, Russell dismissed even this assessment. Instead, he claimed that Brodie was “very fair” and that her book “has stood the test of time and richly deserves to be republished.” Russell regretted that, “when No Man Knows My History burst upon the scene in 1945, it shocked Mormons (Utah and Reorganized alike) and brought harsh rebuttals, yet”—our fashionably “liberal” savant reported—“it was well received by scholarly reviewers.” Exactly who these “scholarly reviewers” were Russell does not say.

In 1986, Paul M. Edwards, currently head of the RLDS Temple School—their ministerial training operation—claimed that

---


131 Ibid. I am unaware of Mormon historians claiming that Brodie uncovered new information, though Bernard DeVoto thought that she did. See his “The Case of the Prophet.”

132 Ibid. Brodie avoided, according to Russell, “accepting uncritically anti-Mormon propaganda which so many other accounts of Joseph Smith and Mormonism have done. She often evokes a real sympathy for Smith, producing admiration for the man.” But on this matter Russell is wrong. The fact is that Brodie fashioned her portrait of Joseph Smith almost exclusively from anti-Mormon accounts. She dismissed elements of anti-Mormon propaganda only when they could not be made to fit her explanation.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., 517.
Brodie’s “biography of Joseph Smith was an open, honest, generally objective, yet strangely limited account.” Without identifying any specific limitations, Edwards then added that Brodie’s “position has often been misunderstood and her motives seriously questioned,” though he also did not indicate how, why, or by whom she has been misunderstood or her motives questioned, since they seem obvious. “But she raised,” according to Edwards, “the significant question of Mormonism as a new religious experience in the Western religious world.” Since Edwards was writing in 1986, he was merely repeating (and garbling) the theme developed by Jan Shipps out of an assertion by Brodie in *No Man Knows.*

Exactly how did Brodie understand Mormonism as a “new religious experience”? Her naturalistic perspective rested on a dogmatic atheism and hence entailed the rejection of all prophetic truth claims. She argued that Joseph Smith consciously fabricated the Book of Mormon and therefore was from the beginning involved in intentional fraud. It is therefore difficult to see exactly how Brodie raised a significant question about what Edwards calls “Mormonism as a new religious experience,” other than to attempt to explain away that experience in naturalistic terms—that is, as the product of a conscious deception by Joseph Smith with which he duped and manipulated the Saints.

In 1974, Flanders treated the publication of *No Man Knows* “as a landmark,” since “a new era dawned with her book. All subsequent serious studies of early Mormonism have necessarily had Brodie as a reference point.”

... While Latter-day Saints Challenge Her Scholarship

Flanders was right: *No Man Knows* was a landmark in explanations of Mormon truth claims. If nothing else it seems to have awakened Latter-day Saints to the necessity of defending the

---

136 Ibid.
foundations of their faith from cunningly crafted naturalistic explanations of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s prophetic charisms.

“Having been presented to the world as a work of literature,” Hugh Nibley noted in 1955, “Mrs. Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith enjoyed with its reviewers the license of creative writing (which it was) and an indulgence that would never have been accorded it had those reviewers been historians and not literary men.”139 Nibley was also confident that “gentlemanly reviews are wont to give well-documented books the benefit of the doubt, especially when to question them might lead to some controversy or, worse still, force the reviewer to do a little work.”140

Nibley also claimed that those who initially applauded Brodie’s book “were not in a position, even if they had the inclination, to put Mrs. Brodie’s impressive documentation to the test; it is doubtful,” he claimed,

if any of them has ever read a line or even seen a copy of the Documentary History of the Church; yet anyone who will take the pains to compare Brodie’s footnote citations from that source with the Documentary History itself will quickly discover that our author has been extremely free not only in misinterpreting but in deliberately misquoting her sources.141

Was the initial praise heaped on No Man Knows from gentlemanly reviewers—“literary men”—who were not inclined or qualified to check on her sources or question her assumptions? Was Brodie praised by essentially uninformed literati—and not by those Bill Russell describes as “scholarly reviewers,” that is, by historians?

Newell G. Bringhamurst, who is currently finishing a biography of Brodie,142 has sketched what he describes as the “applause,

---

139 Nibley, “Introduction,” to F. M. Brodie’s Reliability as a Witness.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Bringhamurst has already published, as a prelude to his biography, several important studies of F. M. Brodie, including the following: “Fawn Brodie and Her Quest for Independence,” Dialogue 22/2 (1989): 79–95; “Applause, Attack, and Ambivalence—Varied Responses to Fawn M. Brodie’s No Man Knows My History,” Utah Historical Quarterly 57/1 (1989): 46–63; “Fawn M. Brodie—Her
attack, ambivalence” found in responses to *No Man Knows*.\(^{143}\) Bringhurst’s alliteration contains the proper labels to describe the responses to Brodie’s work. Being appropriately sympathetic with the object of his inquiries—as befits a biographer of a controversial figure—Bringhurst does not, however, raise the mischievous questions suggested by Nibley’s description of the responses of the “literary men” who initially reviewed *No Man Knows*.

**Signs of Early Scholarly Ambivalence about Brodie . . .**

Nibley exaggerated a bit when he claimed that the reviews of *No Man Knows* had come exclusively from “literary gentlemen.” In addition to Nibley, six other historians reviewed the first edition of Brodie’s book.\(^{144}\) Five of these six reviews were written by gentiles and one by an LDS historian. These tended to be at least somewhat ambivalent if not thoroughly critical of Brodie’s book, and they were published after numerous favorable reviews by literati had already appeared in print, which is exactly the pattern I have documented with Brodie’s *Thomas Jefferson*.

I will examine each of these reviews in detail:

1. Herbert O. Brayer, then the archivist for Colorado, writing in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, claimed that “Mormon readers will . . . quarrel seriously with the author’s interpretations of both Mormon doctrine and the facts presented, and with Mrs.

---

\(^{143}\) See Bringhurst, “Applause, Attack, and Ambivalence.” In this essay, Bringhurst cites and quotes from twenty-three responses to Brodie’s book.

\(^{144}\) The six essays include two unsigned booknotes that appeared in academic journals and exclude the review by Dale Morgan, since he was heavily involved in the production of the book and was therefore not in any position to provide an independent evaluation of its merits and defects.
Brodie’s frequent use of certain notable anti-Mormon works.”145 Quite unlike many—if not most—of the literati who lionized Brodie, Brayer correctly identified the thesis advanced in *No Man Knows*. Brodie’s “Joseph Smith” was, according to Brayer, a genius—a mythmaker—who created a fable, but certainly not a genuine prophet. Brayer thought that Brodie had presented “an impressive array of sources to bolster her contention.”146

Brayer also thought that “Mormon readers will be hard put to find many errors of fact in this account.”147 He also granted that “at various places throughout the work simple errors mar the otherwise excellent scholarship.”148 What might constitute these errors found “throughout the work”? Brayer identified several embarrassing mistakes made by Brodie. For example, he pointed out that Brodie “falls into serious error by stating that painstaking research ‘can uncover all its ideas’—the Book of Mormon. If this were true, Mrs. Brodie would indeed owe her readers another volume in proof.”149

When it was first published, *No Man Knows* was simply larded with mistakes large and small—some though not all of which were silently corrected in succeeding printings. Brayer calls attention to some of these egregious mistakes. He realized that, contrary to her claim, there was no sword in the stone box from which Joseph Smith got the plates and the interpreters.150 “And on page 43 the

---

145 Herbert O. Brayer, in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 32/4 (March 1946): 601. Brodie was heavily dependent upon the notorious gossip located or fabricated by Philastus Hurlbut and then published in Eber D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled, or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, From Its Rise to the Present Time: With Sketches of the Characters of Its Propagators, and a Full Detail of the Manner in Which the Famous Gold Bible Was Brought before the World, to Which Are Added, Inquiries into the Probability That the Historical Part of the Said Bible Was Written by One Solomon Spalding, More Than Twenty Years Ago, and by Him Intended to Have Been Published as a Romance* (Painesville, Ohio: printed and published by the author, 1834). (Spalding is variously spelled.)
146 Brayer, 601.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid., 601–2.
150 Ibid., 601.
date 600 A.D. should read 600 B.C."  

But Brayer identified only part of the problem in the passage with which he quarreled. While referring to the Book of Mormon, in at least the first two printings of *No Man Knows* the following howler appeared: "The first prophet, Nephi, was a young Hebrew who had left Jerusalem A.D. 600 and had sailed to America with his father, Lehi, and a few followers to avoid the destruction of the city."  

Brayer realized that Brodie was wrong in claiming that the Lehi colony left Jerusalem in A.D. 600, but he did not realize that Brodie had also neglected to notice that the founding prophet of the Lehi colony was Lehi and not Nephi.  

Brodie wrote to Dale Morgan on 12 May 1946, over two months after Brayer’s review had appeared in print and admitted that

> There’s really no excuse for . . . the error that the Nephites came to America in 600 A.D. instead of B.C. Golly, I know that date as well as my own birthday, and how I could have blundered so I can’t imagine. Incidentally the latter error was pointed out to me by no less a person than the Catholic Bishop of Salt Lake City—Hunt.  

Brayer recognized that *No Man Knows* “purports to be a ‘definitive biography,’” but he argued that “it is unfortunate that the publishers who awarded Mrs. Brodie one of their coveted Fellowships in Biography had to mislabel the work by terming it a ‘definitive biography.’” He also pointed out that

> It is unfortunate that Mrs. Brodie attempted to dress up already excellent work by coloring episodes in such

---

151 Ibid. This mistake appeared in at least the first two printings of *No Man Knows* before it was silently corrected.

152 Brodie, first few printings of the 1945 edition of *No Man Knows*, 43.

153 Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 150, p. 1. The Catholic Bishop of Salt Lake to whom Brodie referred was the Most Reverend Duane G. Hunt, who served in that capacity from 6 August 1937 to 1951. I have been unable find anything in the Brodie Papers supporting Brodie’s claim concerning Hunt’s role in informing her of the mistake in *No Man Knows*.

154 Brayer, 601.

155 Ibid., 602.
a manner as to leave her open to criticism by objective readers. That this was probably due to an attempt of the publishers to popularize the book may be true, but it will be the cause of considerable adverse comment.156

Unlike other gentile reviewers, Brayer noticed at least some of the more obvious mistakes made by Brodie. But those who edited, published, and promoted No Man Knows seem to have been unaware of such problems. Perhaps because of the mistakes that mar Brodie’s book and also because of its dependence upon anti-Mormon sources, Brayer anticipated that it would “probably be one of the most highly praised as well as highly condemned historical works of 1945”157—exactly what was later said about Brodie’s book on Jefferson.

In 1974, Marvin S. Hill, commenting on Brayer’s anticipation of controversy over Brodie’s book, claimed that it “has indeed been highly praised and highly condemned, with plaudits coming generously from professionals in the field of American history.”158 But on that issue Hill is mostly wrong. As I will show, Nibley got it right—literary experts applauded Brodie’s book and not, as Hill has it, “professionals in the field of American history.” Hill, unlike Bill Russell, was able to cite one example of someone “in the field of American history” who had a high regard for No Man Knows. Thus, according to Hill, “evidence of the respect it still commands is provided by Sidney [Sydney] Ahlstrom of Yale University who recently termed it a ‘sympathetic and insightful account’ which is ‘unequaled’ as a life of the Mormon prophet.”159 Those who have grounded their assessments of Brodie’s book on materialist or naturalistic assumptions have often been unaware of or quite indifferent to its flaws.

156 Ibid.
157 Ibid., 601.
2. Ralph Gabriel, a Yale University historian known for his work on the history of American political thought,\(^{160}\) provided another scholarly review of *No Man Knows.*\(^{161}\) "Mrs. Brodie approaches her study," according to Gabriel, "with memories of a childhood spent in Utah and with certain understandings that spring from a Mormon background. Her book, however, has neither the adulation of a believer nor the venom of an apostate. She has striven to achieve objectivity and has produced a work that may be called appropriately secular history."\(^{162}\) Gabriel granted that Brodie's "account is fresh, well organized, and well written."\(^{163}\) He noted that, though she stresses "the influence of frontier evangelical Protestantism on the Mormon church in its formative days in Kirtland, Ohio," she "does not try to appraise the influence of the American frontier itself in adding to the membership of the church."\(^{164}\) But Gabriel also noted that Brodie "maintains persuasively that the chief influence in drawing converts into the church was not Smith but the Book of Mormon."\(^{165}\) He insisted that Brodie's book "is valuable chiefly as a compilation of information about Joseph Smith and about the history of the church up to the time of his death."\(^{166}\) Gabriel believed that Brodie "makes no effort to explain how a man of Smith's sense of humor could take himself so seriously as to announce himself to be the mouthpiece of deity." He attributes this flaw to her having avoided "psychological or psychiatric analysis or speculation."\(^{167}\) But Brodie's fascination with motivation and her penchant for what even her favorable reviewers sometimes called "intuition" or "mind reading" later turned her into psychobiographer, if not psychohistorian, which turned out to be the very thing that made her famous or infamous.


\(^{162}\) Ibid., 725.

\(^{163}\) Ibid.

\(^{164}\) Ibid.

\(^{165}\) Ibid.

\(^{166}\) Ibid., 726.

\(^{167}\) Ibid.
Finally, Gabriel claimed that Brodie provided "an excellent circumstantial account of the writing of the Book of Mormon." How did Joseph Smith come to write what she denigrated as mere "frontier fiction"? Gabriel reported that "she narrates the story of a boy and young man who was an inveterate seeker of treasure and a believer in 'peep stones' whose imagination was stimulated by the aboriginal remains found in western New York." But he also pointed out that "she has drawn a surface portrait of the prophet." Gabriel was more laudatory of *No Man Knows* than was Brayer, but certainly not entirely enthusiastic about what he described as a "secular history."

3. In 1946, a short unsigned booknote appeared in the *Missouri Historical Review* indicating that Brodie had investigated and rejected the Spalding theory of the authorship of the Book of Mormon—something no other early reviewer had noticed. This reviewer then correctly recognized that Brodie attributes a fecund imagination to Joseph Smith as her way of dismissing the Book of Mormon as mere "frontier fiction." *No Man Knows* is seen as addressed to the gentile reader.

4. Blake McKelvey, then a prominent historian, reviewed *No Man Knows* in the *New England Quarterly*. He read Brodie’s book as a sensitive treatment of Joseph Smith. Brodie had included much talk of buried treasure, Indian antiquities, mysterious mounds, and lost tribes of Israel in her explanation of Joseph Smith’s sources for the Book of Mormon. She argued, according to McKelvey, that after Joseph Smith had fabricated the Book of Mormon from such materials, he somehow “convinced[d] even himself of the divine source” of his ideas. McKelvey noticed that Brodie opined that Joseph Smith might have become a great novelist. There is no unity, humor, or understanding of man in the Book of Mormon, when it is read as “frontier fiction.” He also

---

168 Ibid., 725. Gabriel quoted a long passage from *No Man Knows*, 67, which is crucial in understanding her thesis concerning the Book of Mormon.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid., 726.
171 *Missouri Historical Review* 40/3 (April 1946): 450.
thought that historians would find *No Man Knows* "a model of scholarship."

5. *Christian Century* carried a brief unsigned booknote concerning *No Man Knows* in which it was noted that Brodie had written for the gentile reader—her book will make more sense to such people than previous explanations of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith. And Brodie’s book also appears to be unprejudiced and honest.

6. An additional highly critical review of *No Man Knows* was published by Milton R. Hunter, a Latter-day Saint historian, who argued that Brodie merely pretended not to select her sources, while being unscrupulously selective. Hunter granted that she produced a book that was very well written, at least from a literary viewpoint. He noted mistakes in Brodie’s book: for example, the false and still uncorrected claim that Joseph Smith found a sword in the stone box from which he retrieved the plates and interpreters. Hunter’s review was published despite opposition from Austin Fife, a folklorist and friend of Brodie, who wanted to review her book favorably.

"The Historical Magazines Have Not Been Too Kind to Me"  

Brodie was aware of the criticisms of *No Man Knows* that were written by professional historians. She wrote to Morgan that

---


175 The whole story is spelled out in Fife’s correspondence with Brodie, found in the Brodie Papers, box 9, folder 7. See especially Austin Fife to Brodie, 6 March 1946, where he indicates that he thought that *No Man Knows* was the “first objective and impartial work on Joseph Smith.” See also Austin Fife to F. M. Brodie, 20 March 1945 [467]; and also a copy of Fife’s review of *No Man Knows* (manuscript of a review written for but rejected by the *Pacific Historical Review*).

176 Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 150.
The historical magazines have not been too kind to me. The Missouri Historical Review dismissed [No Man Knows] with a curt, very brief paragraph; the Mississippi Valley Hist. Review, while favorable in spots, managed to mention all of these annoying little errors I have been correcting in printings. And the reviewer made the astonishing statement that while the Church Archives in Salt Lake were closed during the war they are now open to “responsible scholars” with the permission of Church authorities. Milton Hunter, one of the seven presidents of the Seventies, has reviewed [No Man Knows] for the Pacific Hist. Review, and I have heard indirectly, what was to be expected, that it is highly critical. It isn’t out yet.177

Brodie was troubled by such criticism. How could reviewers be so mean to her? Why would they be troubled by errors and mistakes? Why would they not recognize the literary quality of her work? She indicated to Morgan that her husband, political scientist Bernard Brodie, comforted her when she encountered these criticisms by saying, “All of these guys are pedants!”, and [he] reminds me what swell treatment I got from you and DeVoto, and Time magazine, etc. But it all makes me wonder why I should bother trying to make my second book good history. The historians are bound to find errors, and the public won’t care a hang for it.178

Panegyrics from the “Literary Gentlemen”

If reviews of Brodie’s book by historians were somewhat guarded or even mildly critical, those reviews written by Nibley’s “literary gentlemen” tended to be highly favorable. Of the dozens of such reviews, only four were written by individuals who had some familiarity with Latter-day Saints and their history. These were the reviews that drew attention from Brodie.

177 Ibid., frame 117.
178 Ibid., pp. 2–3.
1. The first of these was written by Dale L. Morgan, a cultural Mormon and also a thoroughgoing atheist, who had helped Brodie with her biography of Joseph Smith. Morgan’s review appeared in an influential literary magazine two days after *No Man Knows* was released by Knopf.179

Did Morgan think that *No Man Knows* was, as its publisher insisted, definitive? Almost, but not quite. Why? Because Morgan was at that time still presumably working on what he claimed would be the definitive history of Mormonism. After struggling for seventeen years on his projected three-volume work, he abandoned work on his *magnum opus* and turned to other less controversial issues in the early history of the American West.180

2. Vardis Fisher, known for a “Mormon” novel entitled *The Children of God*,181 noted that Brodie believed that research can uncover all the sources for the Book of Mormon. He also thought that her book was objective, but that she faltered because she knew exactly nothing of psychology or comparative religion. Furthermore, Brodie had built her case by quoting from apostates. Finally, Fisher thought that her book read like a novel. He also noted that she held that Joseph Smith was a deliberate impostor. Fisher noticed that Brodie essentially borrowed her explanation of Joseph Smith from materials published by E. D. Howe.182

Brodie was annoyed by Vardis Fisher’s comments on her book, though Morgan granted that it was one of the three reviews written by those he considered competent in Mormon matters, the

---

179 Morgan, “A Prophet and His Legend,” 7-8.
180 Including his *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (1953; reprint, Lincoln: Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1964). Richard Saunders correctly describes this as “Morgan’s most famous work.” It was, he also notes, quickly written “after Farrar and Rinehart dropped the publication contract for his history of the Mormons and the Guggenheim Foundation failed to renew his fellowship for its writing. Despite the impetus behind its creation it is perhaps the best fur trade biography yet written.” Saunders, *Eloquence from a Silent World*, 11.
other two being Morgan himself and Bernard DeVoto. On 12 May 1946, she wrote to Morgan that “after reading Vardis Fisher’s review in the Sunday [New York] Times, I spent a bad day reflecting on the futility of writing books at all, and particularly spending seven years at it.” But at the same time she also told Morgan that she considered herself the “luckiest of all authors” because he had favorably reviewed her book: she told Morgan that “your review, simply bowled me over.”

3. Bernard DeVoto, a famous American literary figure who was born in Ogden and was curious about Latter-day Saints, thought that Brodie had written the “first honest and intelligent biography of Joseph Smith.” He also claimed that Brodie’s book was the first “dependable history of Mormonism,” though he had “to add that W. A. Linn sifted a good deal of her material forty-three years ago and came to conclusions that square with hers.” According to DeVoto, Brodie had produced “a brilliant and largely satisfying book.” She has “settled many questions and solved many mysteries for good.” She wrote with a “profound sympathy for the Mormon people,” and she wrote “objectively about their history.”

DeVoto also noted that “she also has written as a detached, modern intelligence, grounded in naturalism, rejecting the supernatural.” “In the end everything else hinges on his visions, his revelations and his writings. Mrs. Brodie forthrightly rejects the explanation which all Mormons have always accepted, that they came from God and explains them in purely mundane terms.” But DeVoto flatly rejected her explanation of Joseph Smith’s crucial prophetic truth claims. He complained that “she pretty consistently avoids the crucial issue.” Brodie tried to explain the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith’s primitive effort to write a novel. “She endows it with an integrated, carefully wrought structure and subtle, eloquent and moving English style.” DeVoto saw it differently. “Actually the gold Bible had neither form nor

---

183 Morgan to Brodie, 22 December 1945, in Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism, 102.
184 Brodie to Morgan, 27 November 1945, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 121.
185 Ibid.
structure of any kind, its imagination is worse than commonplace, it is squalid, and the prose is lethal. The book Smith wrote is not a novel to any literary critic. Moreover, this theory necessarily describes Smith as a lifelong impostor and charlatan, which is incredible.” DeVoto did not think that Joseph Smith was an intentional fraud. Instead, “he had hallucinations. Out of them he developed a prophet’s authority, a religion, a society, a Bible and a series of messages from Almighty God. Once the momentum of the Church was established, he necessarily had to fake visions in emergency. His paranoia was intermittent and in the beginning slight,” when he was dictating the Book of Mormon, “but it grew and finally it overwhelmed him.”

Concerning Bernard DeVoto’s review of *No Man Knows*, Brodie indicated to Morgan that she could not pretend to be anything but elated by it; I glow inside everytime I look at it. I was really very apprehensive of what he might say, and the fact that he chose to be so generous brought me extra pleasure. The only thing that he said that was really unfair was that I said the B. of M. [Book of Mormon] has a subtle, eloquent and moving English style. I think when I write him a note of thanks I shall chide him about that. Golly, I even quoted Mark Twain about it being “chloroform in print.”

Brodie then indicated that “DeVoto of course absurdly underestimates the Book of Mormon. I wonder,” she mused, “if he ever really read it through.” If DeVoto could be suspected of not having given sufficient attention to the Book of Mormon, what might one conclude concerning the attention given to that book by all those “literary gentlemen” without Mormon or Utah background who heaped praise on *No Man Knows*?

\[187\] Ibid., 2.  
\[188\] Brodie to Morgan, 18 December 1945, Morgan Papers, frame 129, roll 10.  
\[189\] Ibid.
4. Harry Beardsley, the author of an earlier abortive biography of Joseph Smith,\(^{190}\) claimed that Brodie’s treatment of Joseph Smith “answers none of the many questions that have made Mormonism and Joseph Smith controversial subjects for more than a century.” He felt that Brodie had slanted “her own interpretation in favor of Smith.” Brodie plays down “factors that caused the gentiles justifiably to view the Mormon movement with alarm.” She “has striven to do an objective job,” but her Mormon “background could not permit her to be wholly objective—and whose background can?”\(^{191}\) Clearly Beardsley was annoyed that Brodie had managed to produce a book that was more attractive than his own sectarian diatribe against Joseph Smith. Brodie thought Beardsley’s charge that she was “pro-Mormon . . . really very amusing, in the light of the reception at home” that her book received.\(^{192}\)

**Other Literati Respond to Brodie**

1. One day before Dale Morgan’s highly influential review of *No Man Knows My History* appeared in print, Elmo S. Watson\(^{193}\) claimed that “Joseph Smith was a product of the American frontier,” coming from a region that somehow “produced more new religions than any other place or any other time in New World history.”\(^{194}\) Watson reckoned that “the religion [Joseph Smith] founded was well adapted to the crude, vigorous frontier America.” But why did Joseph manage to succeed, when others failed? Watson thinks that this is the question Brodie answers. “Either Smith is depicted as a prophet . . . , or he is a charlatan, a

---


\(^{192}\) Brodie to Morgan, 12 May 1946, Morgan Papers, roll 10, frame 150, p. 2.


lecherous rogue and a false prophet." Watson claims that "somewhere between these two extremes stands the real Joseph Smith. Mrs. Brodie," according to Watson, "seems to have captured him. In a volume that is a rare combination of sound scholarship and lively, readable narrative she gives us a believable picture of one of America's most interesting characters." Believable indeed!

2. On 24 November 1945, Frederic L. Bullard indicated that Brodie had shown that Joseph Smith was the most amazing of fakes. Bullard was impressed by her effort to link Indian mounds to the Book of Mormon. He thought that Brodie had shown that Joseph began digging for treasure and then claimed to have found some plates. He also claims that no one ever saw those plates, except three individuals in a vision (he fails to mention the Eight Witnesses). Bullard also thought that Brodie had shown that Joseph Smith had a talent for hypnosis.

3. On 24 November 1945, an unsigned review of No Man Knows appeared in the New Yorker. This anonymous reviewer saw Brodie as having shown that Joseph Smith was a psychic discoverer of buried treasure in upper New York. Of course, given that premise, what Joseph made available was "patently fake," and it was employed to create a tyranny. Brodie, in telling her story, was, of course, objective. Unfortunately, for this reviewer, Brodie never explained what the Mormon religion is and how it works.

4. On 25 November 1945, Kelsey Guilfoil claimed that Brodie had pictured Joseph Smith as a "virtually illiterate" fellow who was interested in the great mounds near his home and hence ended up telling a strange story of "a part of the 10 lost tribes of Israel." Brodie's biography was described as "a scholarly and definitive study of Joseph Smith," and fully sympathetic. Brodie "lets the facts speak for themselves." Guilfoil also described Brodie as an apologist for Mormon things, since he did "not find

195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
197 Bullard wrote a travel book entitled Historic Summer Haunts from Newport to Portland (Boston: Little, Brown, 1912).
199 Unsigned review in the New Yorker, 24 November 1945.
that she has ever quit Mormonism. Yet her portrait of Joseph Smith . . . is about as impartial as any Mormon or ‘gentile’ could write.” Previously, “writers from Mark Twain down . . . have exhibited bias, or lacked scholarship, or were ax-grinders and special pleaders.” But Brodie, according to Guilfoil, had managed to produce “a monumental and lasting piece of work.”

5. Also on 25 November 1945, Ernest Cady parroted Brodie’s publisher’s claim that *No Man Knows* is “the definitive biography of the Mormon prophet.” Cady thought that Brodie had shown that Joseph Smith had “an ‘imagination,’” and he also wrote that she rejected the notion that Joseph Smith was either “a victim of fits or of adolescent mysticism,” whatever that might be.

Quite contrary to Cady’s reading of *No Man Knows*, it should be noted that Brodie describes young Joseph Smith as “a visionary boy caught by revival hysteria and channeled into a life of mysticism and exhortation” (p. 16), and she describes Mormonism as a kind of combination of “Jewish and Christian mysticism” (p. ix; cf. 172). Brodie also speculates that Joseph, perhaps to compensate “for his sense of inferiority . . . had endowed himself with mystic powers to which no one else could aspire” (p. 168). But she also insisted that since “embedded in Joseph’s character was the commonplace Yankee mixture of piety and avarice,” he was not “a true mystic.” Why? Presumably because he was not “preoccupied with things of the spirit” and so forth (p. 263). After insisting that “Mormonism became not only a belief but also a way of life,” Brodie also then opined that “it had never pretended to be a mystical sanctification or even a new ethical code” (p. 295). So Cady’s confusion over whether Joseph was a mystic may have roots in what Brodie had written.

6. Ted Robinson, also on 25 November, described Brodie’s book as “definitive.” He praised her “narrative skill and . . . literary technique.” He also, of course, praised her for “treat[ing] her subject with [an] objective and unbiased attitude of a

---


scholar.” She was, according to Robinson, “utterly without prejudice.”

7. An unidentified reviewer, whose evaluation also appeared on 25 November, claimed that Brodie, unlike most of the others who have written on Joseph Smith, was not biased “one way or the other.” Instead, she was anxious “to reconcile contradictory stories.” Then we are told of Joseph Smith’s “curious hunts for treasure,” the Book of Mormon, and his lynching.

8. On 26 November, Newsweek indicated that Brodie had worked on her book for nine years (1936 to 1945) and also described it as definitive. Brodie is said to have taken up one side of an either-or analysis of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet or a Hitler. And on which side would Newsweek want its readers to place Joseph Smith? Be that as it may, Brodie simply cannot believe the story told by Joseph Smith. Why? Well, for one reason, “nobody ever saw his golden plates, at least not long enough to decipher their purported hieroglyphics.” Of course, Joseph was a dictator with an army—remember, he was a Hitler. He went against “almost every canon of nineteenth-century economics, religion, and morals.” He had the “boundless ambitions of modern dictators,” and hence “Smith went against most American traditions.” But he was also a genius who created a fable.

It may well be that the reviewer for Newsweek merely followed Brodie’s suggestion in her preface that, “if one were unscrupulously selective in choosing details, one could make [Joseph Smith] out to be . . . a political menace—a dictator complete with an army, propaganda ministry, and secret police who created an authoritarian domination on the American frontier” (p. viii). She also added that she believed that “it is easy to match his unscientific racial theories, his autocratic organization, and his boundless ambition with the theories, organization, and ambitions of modern dictators” (p. viii). In these two sentences, Brodie moved from supposition about what might be done “if one were unscrupulously selective,” to a claim about how “easy” it would be to turn

Joseph Smith into a dictator. Can anyone blame the harried *Newsweek* reviewer for taking up her confident suggestion about what it would be easy to do?

9. On 27 November, Lewis S. Gannett described Brodie’s book as having dealt with the Book of Mormon in the following way: it was, of course, written by Joseph Smith “as conscious artifice; but one of the most consistent qualities of mystics is a genius for self-conviction.” It is, according to Gannett, properly labeled by Brodie as mere “frontier fiction” because she uncovers its nineteenth-century sources. Gannett thought that Brodie had demonstrated “elements of conscious deception” in Joseph Smith’s career.205

10. Marguerite Young, on 8 December 1945, claimed that Brodie had shown that Joseph Smith founded a church “by a series of accidents.” It all began with treasure hunting and ended up with a tale of a “purely hypothetical Indian tribe of vanished Semitic mound-builders,” with Moroni being a “guardian spirit of the lost tribe.” She also reiterated that only Joseph Smith saw the plates. Joseph “devoted himself to translating the microscopic picture handwriting on the invisible golden plates.” Ms. Young even claimed that Joseph Smith’s “Semitic Indians” can be discounted because later research shows that they “never did exist.” This review is especially larded with confusion over the contents of Brodie’s book.206

11. “Joseph Smith, businessman, drinker, wrestler, politician and the author” of the Book of Mormon—all this according to the understanding of Brodie’s book offered on 9 December 1945 by W. J. G. Rogers. Brodie, he asserted, “lets us have the story raw and strong right in the face, as it were.” It all started with Joseph Smith’s “search for treasure with the aid of magic.” But what Americans “did to Mormons was what Hitler did to Jews.”207

---

205 Lewis S. Gannett, *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 November 1945. He was also the author of *John Steinbeck, Personal and Bibliographic Notes* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Haskell House, 1939).


12. On 22 December 1945, much like Beardsley, John M. Thurber argued that Brodie, because of her Mormon background, tended to be too cautious in her use of anti-Mormon sources.  

13. Henry S. Canby promoted Brodie’s book for the Book-of-the-Month Club by claiming that hers was the “first satisfactory explanation” of Joseph Smith. He also declared, of course, that Brodie “writes objectively.” Why? Because “no veils are drawn over Smith’s charlatanism, his sexuality, his duplicity.” Joseph Smith, however, “must be numbered among the great leaders of men in history.” And Canby mentioned “the gossip angle of this book.”

14. On 9 January 1946, Orville Prescott, while reviewing *No Man Knows*, claimed that Joseph Smith once walked upon the water. Well, he had heard that story and just had to repeat it. Prescott informed his readers that Brodie’s book was “called definitive by its publishers,” and, furthermore, because *No Man Knows* is “scrupulously objective . . . it is quite impossible to label it as a ‘pro’ or ‘anti.’” But devout Mormons, of course, will label it “anti.”

Prescott thought that Brodie invoked vivid memories of melodramatic fiction in her biography. Remember, she always wanted to write fiction, and Vardis Fisher thought that she ought to try her hand at it. Some, however, would see her book as too “pro,” according to Prescott. With Joseph Smith we are faced with an either-or decision. Either he was an “infamous impostor” or a ‘prophet.’” Brodie shows him to have been “a dabbler in magic.

---


BRODIE, NO MAN KNOWS MY HISTORY (MIDGLEY)

'a low necromancer' who . . . went into the money-digging business.' Then he came up with a tale about finding gold plates and then the Book of Mormon. Well, how did he actually produce a long text? The "American frontier was crawling with inspired prophets," according to Prescott. That takes care of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith was "a product of his times and of the frontier," where "piety and avarice were confused," and where "the glory of God was identified with the making of money." Prescott thought that Brodie had not decided "whether Joseph Smith was a marvelously successful and cynical fraud, or whether he was a sincere victim of his own hallucinations."212

15. Then on 13 January 1946, Clip Boutell claimed that Brodie, "with loving care . . . has demolished the Mormon prophet," and in so doing she used only the "mildest irony." She "lets her revelations tell their own story."213

16. On 15 January 1946, a New York City newspaper carried the following rather lurid headline: "On Recount Joseph Smith had 49 Wives!: New Life Story of the Mormon Leader Reveals Startling Facts."214 But the review reveals nothing, except that the unnamed reviewer was taken by what they believed could best be described as Mormon "mystic rites."

17. In February 1946 a Cincinnati, Ohio, newspaper reported that Brodie had written a "readable, thoroughly documented biography of Joseph Smith."215

18. The Bookmark reported to librarians eager to purchase books that Brodie’s account of Joseph Smith was "readable, objective, thoroughly documented."216

19. Time, on 28 January 1946, reported that with "skill and scholarship and admirable detachment," Brodie had dealt with Joseph Smith, whose revelation was "an unanswerable instrument

215 The Cincinnati Guidepost, February 1946.
216 The Albany Bookmark, May 1946.
of power.” This anonymous reviewer could see that in dealing with Joseph Smith one is faced with a fundamental either-or question: “was he a shameless fraud or true prophet?” *Time* incorrectly thought that Brodie had argued that he was “something of both.” But *Time* also thought that he “was an out-&-out impositor.” Yet the “impositor Smith came close to being a prophet” by “gradually hypnotiz[ing] himself as well as others.”\(^{217}\)

20. Moyle Rice, in a literary magazine, reported that *No Man Knows* was the fruit of nine years of research, and its distinguished publisher calls it definitive and claims that it “vividly illuminates many hitherto hidden passages.”\(^{218}\)

21. On 10 August 1947, Lloyd Lewis, something of an author himself,\(^{219}\) claimed that Brodie had written the best book on Mormonism. Brodie’s book, Lewis thought, must now be included in the august list that included Werner’s simply awful book on Brigham Young and Beardsley’s equally bad book on Joseph Smith.\(^{220}\)

**In 1963–64 the Brits Also Review It**

In 1963 Eyre and Spottiswoode published *No Man Knows* for the British market. Summaries of several reviews reveal their reactions:

1. T. G. Platten thought that Brodie had shown that Joseph Smith was concerned about the lost ten tribes and buried treasure, then wrote a “spurious history” of an American Indian race.” He also claimed that Latter-day Saints make an “identification of God with material prosperity,” and hence “material rewards need not be despised.”\(^{221}\)

---

217 "Mormon Moses," 58, 60.
2. Augustine Martin\textsuperscript{222} thought that Brodie had shown that Joseph Smith blended the spiritual and commercial but that thousands gave up wealth and security to follow the Prophet.\textsuperscript{223}

3. J. P. O’Reilly thought that Brodie had shown that there was a wealthy, lunatic fringe attracted to Joseph Smith. He also reported that Brodie “seems impartial.” O’Reilly was certain that Joseph Smith had achieved “financial success as a charlatan,” wrote a mythical history, and that the plates were not seen by anyone. He was sure, according to Brodie, that Joseph Smith’s “holy book” was no longer read by the Saints.\textsuperscript{224}

4. Denis Deagan called \textit{No Man Knows} a classic. Brodie was not embittered, and hence was no debunker. He liked her “calm academic prose” and her warm if critical loyalty to the church. Loyalty? She had declared the real Joseph Smith to be either a prophet or a fraud. Deagan also noted that Brodie dismissed the Spalding theory.\textsuperscript{225}

5. Gene Baro\textsuperscript{226} thought that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon to tell the story of the “Lost Tribes of Israel.” He believed that Brodie treated Joseph Smith “seriously and sympathetically.”\textsuperscript{227}


\textsuperscript{226} Gene Baro, ed., \textit{After Appomattox: The Image of the South in Its Fiction, 1865–1900} (New York: Corinth, 1963); and he was also involved with \textit{Claes Oldenburg, Drawings & Prints}, introduction and commentary by Gene Baro (London: Chelsea House, 1969); and \textit{Twenty-First National Print Exhibition} (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1978), which was the catalog of an exhibition held in 1978–79.

6. Benedict Kiely\(^\text{228}\) was eager to refer to the "faked and fanciful revelations" of Joseph Smith, who "combined his treasure-hunting and longbowmanship" to gather a following. Of course, "nobody ever say [sic] the plates." The Book of Mormon is frontier fiction—a popular history of Moundbuilders—and then somehow Joseph Smith became religious.\(^\text{229}\)

7. Gilbert Thomas\(^\text{230}\) believed that Brodie "looks impartially at Joseph Smith."\(^\text{231}\)

8. H. D. Ziman referred to Brodie's nice treatment of "Holy Joe."\(^\text{232}\)

9. A. W. Parsons wrote fourteen one-sentence paragraphs about Brodie's book in four inches of printed text.\(^\text{233}\)

Brodie could not have been pleased with what these gents wrote about No Man Knows. These reviews are simply embarrassing. Nothing more can be said about them. But they served to advertise her book and spread confusion about it and about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon as well.

"A Broad, Promising Middle Ground"?

When No Man Knows first appeared, the Saints were unable to respond adequately to all the substantive charges Brodie brought against Joseph Smith. The primary reason was that there were no professional Latter-day Saint historians who had given attention to the relevant literature. Hugh Nibley, whose training is in ancient history, wrote a witty reply to her book that signaled to faithful


Latter-day Saints, and perhaps to others, that there was still room for a nonnaturalistic account of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's prophetic truth claims. Then, in several series of essays, Nibley provided numerous reasons to believe that the Book of Mormon was an authentic ancient history. He stressed its subtle complexities, which seem beyond the capacities of anyone in America at the time the book was published.234

The result has been that the generation following Nibley has been much more intently concerned than was the previous one with the teachings found in the Book of Mormon and also, of course, with the question of its historical authenticity. Of course, not all Latter-day Saints were pleased with Nibley's efforts to read the Book of Mormon as an authentic ancient text or to coax the Saints into reading it carefully for its prophetic messages. In order for the teachings found in the Book of Mormon to be taken seriously, it was obvious to the Saints that it could not be read as "frontier fiction," which is exactly what Brodie had done.

According to Marvin Hill, "the most plausible exposition of the Smith hypothesis [that Joseph Smith fashioned the Book of Mormon out of nineteenth-century sources] was made by Fawn Brodie, author of No Man Knows My History."235 Brodie argued, again according to Hill, that "Smith employed a fertile imagination and unusual responsiveness to his environment to magnify the theme of Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews, a book which identifies the American Indians as the Lost Tribes of Israel."236 Instead of lifting the narrative portions of the Book of Mormon from an old and even presumably lost Spalding romance, either real or imagined, Brodie initially pictured Joseph Smith as having


236 Ibid.
borrowed heavily from a book by Ethan Smith entitled *View of the Hebrews*.\(^{237}\)

Hill thus concludes that Brodie felt that both the *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon describe the deterioration of an Israelite civilization in America, mention a written record of the aborigines once buried in the earth, and sponsor missionary efforts to convert the Indians. She points also to the fact that *View of the Hebrews* cites Ezekiel chapter thirty-seven in a manner suggestive of the Mormon use to vindicate their sacred book, and shows that Joseph knew of the work since he quoted it in his newspaper in 1842. Some additional parallels seem superficial. She states that both books quoted “copiously and almost exclusively” from Isaiah. Actually they both cite a number of Old Testament books. It is true, as she indicates, that both works open with a mention of the destruction of Jerusalem but the fact is not especially significant. The Book of Mormon refers to the Babylonian conquest while Ethan Smith’s work discusses that of the Romans.\(^{238}\)

Other than a brief, laudatory review by Bill Russell in 1972 of the revised edition of *No Man Knows*, to which I have already referred, the only other examinations of Brodie’s modification of her original stance on Joseph Smith have been offered by Marvin Hill.\(^{239}\)

\(^{237}\) In the second edition of *No Man Knows*, Brodie silently moved away from the *View of the Hebrews* as the source for the plot of the Book of Mormon and moved overtly to the notion that its plot is grounded in Joseph Smith’s inner and also family life. By 1971 she had become at least somewhat familiar with Freudian and other psychoanalytic theories. Her papers (housed at the Marriott Library at the University of Utah) show only a modest command of psychoanalytic literature. And she never made an effort to either apply or test any specific theory. She merely dabbled in the literature on abnormal psychology, applying what she considered insights she gleaned from apparently casual reading.

\(^{238}\) Hill, “The Historiography of Mormonism,” 419.

In 1972 Hill asserted that Brodie’s biography of Joseph Smith “has been recognized by most professional American historians as the standard work on the life of Joseph Smith and perhaps the most important single work on early Mormonism.” However, he offers no evidence to support this generalization. He then attempts “to consider Brodie’s interpretation . . . on her own secular terms.” Hill faults Brodie for attempting to answer the question: “Is Joseph Smith a prophet of God in the sense that the Church he founded maintains . . . ?”

Hill insists that Brodie made a dreadful mistake in attempting to answer that question.

Hill does not believe that the question of whether Joseph Smith was a prophet can be dealt with by a historian because

The historian has no sources written with the finger of God to prove that Joseph Smith was called to his divine mission, nor does he have any human sources to prove conclusively that he was not. One’s answers to this cosmic question depend entirely upon the assumptions he brings to it—assumptions about the nature of the world and man’s place in it; these rest in the last analysis upon personal predilection, not historical evidence.

Therefore, in 1972 Hill emphatically did not think that there could be “any final resolution to the question which” he thinks Brodie “mistakenly tries to answer.”

If a final, conclusive proof is not possible, could some proximate indication be worked out? Hill’s dated, naive positivism leads him into confusion over what possibilities are available to historians. Proof is possible in formal logic and mathematics, but not when one confronts the past and must depend upon fragmentary and conflicting sources, most of which already carry with them the biases and assumptions of those who recorded them in the first place. Certainly faith does not require that its object be proven conclusively. It is not that answers, to what Hill calls a “cosmic question[,] depend entirely upon assumptions” brought to it by

---

241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
the historian. The answer to every question will be colored by the biases and assumptions—the formal and informal pre-understandings—employed by the historian. Hence the determination to approach prophetic truth claims with secular, naturalistic assumptions is itself a decision on the "cosmic question." Moreover, it is not obvious that it is the correct decision, since it begs the very question it sets out to answer.

Hill did not sense that, by attempting "to meet Brodie on her own grounds," that is, with what he called "the naturalistic assumptions of the professional historian," he had already begun to beg the important question of whether the Book of Mormon is true and Joseph Smith a prophet. Naturalistic assumptions are not neutral when they are invoked in inquiries into prophetic truth claims. Hill takes these assumptions for granted. Hence he did not even bother to set them out. He also neglected to provide a critical examination of them or their role in explanations of the Book of Mormon or Joseph Smith's prophetic truth claims. Why? I suspect that the reason is that he accepted Brodie's background assumptions, and chose only to quarrel with her about the details of her explanation of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith.

If I am wrong about this or if Hill has recently changed his mind, I invite him to come forward with a clarification or explanation. The fact is that anti-Mormons and cultural Mormon dissidents who are now attempting to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic ancient history sometimes identify Hill as a collaborator in their endeavors. 244

243 ibid., 73.
244 Some of those who now argue that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon and that it is not an authentic ancient text read Hill in precisely the way I do. For example, David P. Wright claims that "some studies in recent years" have attempted to understand the Book of Mormon not as an ancient composition, but as a recent one, "set pseudonymously or pseudographically in the past." Wright then includes in his list of such revisionist studies two essays by Hill. See Wright, "'In Plain Terms That We May Understand': Joseph Smith's Transformation of Hebrews in Alma 12–13," in New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, 165. See Novak, "Naturalistic Assumptions and the Book of Mormon," for a careful criticism of Hill's stance. Compare Novak's careful arguments to Hill's angry, confused response. See Hill's "Afterword," BYU Studies 30/4 (1990): 117–24.
Writers like Hill have generally been a shy and retiring lot—not bold and adventuresome, not given to clarity and candor, and not equipped for sophisticated reflection on the consequences of their explanations for themselves or the Saints. While some are indifferent about such matters, others who strive to turn the Book of Mormon into a “recent composition” (or into what Brodie more boldly described as “frontier fiction”) seem concerned to retain their identity as members of the Church. Those who do tend to argue that portions of the book may still be somehow inspiring or even “inspired,” even when the book is read as a “recent composition” or as Joseph Smith’s fiction. Others who do not care about their standing in the Church, usually take the now well-known tack and argue or imply that its having been written by Joseph Smith makes it and him into something fraudulent.

Hill provides a nice list of items in Brodie’s revised edition of her biography of Joseph Smith where “it is undeniable that her history retains its relevance and authenticity.” For example, she was able to dethrone the Spalding-Rigdon theory of the authorship of the Book of Mormon, and she pictured Joseph Smith as “a man with rich imagination and high intelligence who responded to the intellectual currents of his time from which he drew elements which shaped Mormon thought.” Of course, exactly this portrait of Joseph was essential to Brodie’s argument that he was a liar and charlatan. Hill also finds something splendid in Brodie’s having brushed aside older psychological explanations of Joseph Smith. He was enthralled by Brodie’s “humanizing” of Joseph Smith—“Brodie focused on his human qualities, his loves, his hates, his fears, his hopes and ambitions,” and so forth. Of course, this is just what she later did with Jefferson.

But mostly Hill quibbles with Brodie for not having realized that being a money-digger and being religious and sincere were not necessarily inconsistent, if one understands the times. Unfortunately, neither Brodie nor Hill define what they mean by the slippery word “religion.” Be that as it may, Hill faults Brodie for having “too much of Sigmund Freud, too much of

---

245 Hill, “Brodie Revisited,” 73.
246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
rationalism” in her to properly appreciate the mixing and blending of superstition, mysticism, magic and the occult that went into Joseph Smith’s “religion” and also into that of those who became his followers. Hill pictures Brodie as “a disgruntled ex-Mormon striking back at a ‘myth’ told her in her childhood.” What he wants to charter is a view of Joseph Smith in which he did not have real plates, or encounter real heavenly messengers, but where all of that is somehow explained as part of what Hill calls the “mysticism” of the age in which Mormonism arose.

Hill’s final estimation of Brodie’s biography is “that it falls short of greatness because of fundamental weaknesses which no amount of patching in a later edition can correct.” He clearly wants to dethrone Brodie in order to justify his own attempt at writing a naturalistic biography of Joseph Smith, one that would employ what he called “her own secular terms.” Hill ends his first review of Brodie with the following: “To write the truth about a man who was so many sided, so controversial as Joseph Smith is a very difficult thing. Nonetheless, with an attitude less cynical than Fawn Brodie’s, it is time for some of us to try.” In 1977, Marvin Hill’s sister, Donna Hill, published a biography of Joseph Smith. Marvin Hill had been at least its coauthor, but had his

248 Ibid., 75.
249 Ibid., 79.
250 Ibid., 75 (“she cannot handle the religious mysticism of the man or of the age”), 78 (“in short there was an element of mysticism in Joseph and the early Mormons that Brodie did not face up to”). In this initial treatment of Brodie, Hill gives no indication whatsoever of what he means by mysticism or how the appropriation of such a category would fit with the Book of Mormon or with Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims.
251 Ibid., 74.
252 Ibid., 72. Or with “naturalistic assumptions.” He used both expressions. Ibid., 73.
name removed at the last minute for reasons that are not entirely clear.

In 1974 Hill published another review of *No Man Knows.*\(^{254}\) In this second review, Hill claimed that Brodie’s “book has indeed been highly praised and highly condemned, with plaudits coming generously from professionals in the field of American history.”\(^{255}\) The criticisms of Brodie’s book were characterized by Hill as essentially “dissertations, innumerable articles, books circulated largely among the Mormon intellectual community,” which “have questioned Brodie’s denial of Smith’s first vision, her thesis that Smith was a gold digger before he turned prophet and the argument that the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham, two of Smith’s works considered ancient scripture, were written by Smith himself.”\(^{256}\) But these criticisms of Brodie are downgraded by Hill.\(^{257}\) “That Brodie’s work has gone so long without effective challenge or criticism is peculiar,” according to him. Hill thought it remarkable “in the face of so much change and revision” in the understanding of religion in America and of

dissertation. His basic assumption is set forth in that book as follows: “Some historians, including Fawn Brodie, have tended to view a belief in magic . . . as chicaneity and fraud—proof that Smith’s religious claims were not genuine. A more temperate view has recently emerged among scholars of religion, and it is now clear that magic is but one means people employ in efforts to make contact with the divine.” Ib.) 24, for Hill’s cautious acceptance of Brodie’s explanation of how Joseph Smith was able to fashion the Book of Mormon.

\(^{254}\) Hill, “Secular or Sectarian History?” 78–96.

\(^{255}\) Ibid., 78. As I have shown, this is not true.

\(^{256}\) Ibid.

\(^{257}\) In his *Quest for Refuge*, 24. Hill opined that Brodie “argued that the Book of Mormon was written by Joseph Smith himself, unaided, except that he borrowed ideas from Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews.*” He then added that, “although Brodie has had her critics [citing his two reviews of *No Man Knows* and nothing else], her version of the origin of the Book of Mormon has remained the most widely accepted one in non-Mormon scholarly circles during the past forty-four years.” Ibid. If this were true, and it may be true, what does it demonstrate? That scholars outside the Latter-day Saint community, who know virtually nothing of the details of the debate over the authorship of the Book of Mormon, tend to accept something like Brodie’s account? Does that lend credibility to her account? Hill simply remains silent on all the crucial issues. But his cautious language signals to cultural Mormons and dissidents that he believes that something like Brodie’s account of the origin of the Book of Mormon is the truth about the matter.
the Mormon past since 1945 that “Brodie’s biography has maintained its status.”

In 1974 Hill attributed what he considered “Brodie’s considerable influence with professional historians . . . to her skill as a narrator, to her impressive research in many areas—especially her background on the Book of Mormon and the Spalding theory of its origin, as well as that on the Book of Abraham” and so forth. He then noted that some Latter-day Saints “have been reluctant to attempt a biography” of Joseph Smith. “As for the non-Mormons, they . . . have perhaps been satisfied with what Brodie had to say and seem hesitant to deal with Smith’s visions, his golden plates and his witnesses, all of which are awkward to handle objectively,” that is, in secular, naturalistic terms.

Once again Hill faulted Brodie for dwelling on “the truth or untruth of the prophet’s claims.” “By concentrating upon whether or not Smith’s vision actually occurred, Brodie missed its historical significance.” Once again he faulted Brodie for not being sufficiently sensitive to what he labeled the mysticism common to the age in which Joseph Smith lived. Hill was clearly attempting to get beyond what he thought of as faulty either-or alternatives in dealing with Joseph Smith.

Hill clearly wanted to avoid Brodie’s approach of seeing Joseph Smith from either a sectarian (genuine prophet) point of view or a secular perspective in which he is pictured as a liar and charlatan. He was looking for a middle ground between those alternatives.

But what about Smith’s claims that he translated Egyptian papyri to obtain the Book of Abraham, his

---

258 Hill, “Secular or Sectarian History?” 79.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid., 80.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid., 84.
263 Ibid. “She never explains how so many of mystical persuasion were attracted to him when he was supposedly cynical, contemptuous of sectarianism and revivalism, and an opportunist who exploited the piety of others for his own aggrandizement” (p. 80); within Joseph Smith and his followers “there was an element of mysticism that made the transition more natural” from magic and the occult to religion “than Brodie was willing to admit” (p. 86).
story of gold plates and his witnesses? Should not, as Brodie puts it, “the casual reader . . . be shocked” at his pretentious claims in the field of religion? Or are such claims to miracles basically any different from those that have traditionally given support to Christianity? If we assume that Smith wrote the Book of Abraham, which the Utah church denies, for Smith to claim Abraham as author of his book may be no more fraudulent than for the writers of the early New Testament epistles to claim apostolic authorship.264

No more fraudulent indeed!

Hill then justifies such presumably fraudulent claims by arguing that “a new religion required an authoritarian base, particularly in the face of so many contending sects in nineteenth-century America.” Then Hill claims that Joseph Smith said “that when the angel first came to him to tell him of the plates, he thought it was a dream but later changed his mind.”265 What Joseph Smith dictated to his scribe, quoted here in an unedited version, is as follows:

it was on the 22d day of Sept. AD 1822 and thus he [the angel] appeared unto me three times in one night and once on the next day and then I immediately went to the place and found where the plates was deposited as the angel of the Lord had commanded me and straightaway made three attempts to get them and then being exceedingly frightened I supposed it had been a dream of Vision but when I considered I knew that it was not therefore I cried unto the Lord in the agony of my soul why can I not obtain them behold the angel appeared unto me again and said unto me you have not kept the commandments of the Lord.266

264 Ibid., 91.
265 Ibid., 91–92.
266 Joseph Smith “History” [1831], exactly as found in The Papers of Joseph Smith, vol. 1, Autobiographical and Historical Writings, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 8.
Hill reads this passage as suggesting "the possibility that some things which may have been looked upon as natural in the early years took on more miraculous significance as time passed. Rather than deception," Hill speculates that "we may be dealing with a frame of mind in some ways more idealistic and mystical and less cynical than our own."267 With Hill we may be dealing with someone who has uncritically accepted the prevailing secular bias against prophetic truth claims, and who therefore turns to explanations that are entirely naturalistic.

Thomas G. Alexander once contrasted "the scholarly Marvin Hill's" reviews of Brodie's book268 with "the rather outrageous Hugh Nibley's No Ma'am That's Not History."269 Outrageous? Why? Because he mocked the motley collection of opinions hostile to Joseph Smith that were swept up by Brodie and used as the support for her naturalistic explanation of Joseph Smith's prophetic charisms?

But what exactly was Professor Alexander's "scholarly Marvin Hill" trying to say? His thesis is summed up in the following:

Perhaps what Brodie may have recognized at last is that her original interpretation perceived Joseph Smith in falacious [sic] terms, as either prophet in the traditional Mormon sense or else as faker. Her original thesis opens considerable room for speculation because its either-or alternatives were precisely the same as those of the early Mormon apologist and missionary, Orson Pratt, [which were] presented to his potential converts in the 1840s and 1850s. But between Pratt and Brodie a hundred years of Mormon experience have intervened.

267 Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History?" 92.
Whereas Pratt affirmed that with Smith’s accomplishments he must have been a true prophet, Brodie, looking at the man’s limitations, concluded he was a fraud. Possibly now historians should begin to explore the broad, promising middle ground which neither Pratt nor Brodie fully perceived.270

So what Hill wanted to do was advance his own secular, naturalist explanation of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. In it Joseph would be seen as a superstitious, magic-saturated “mystic” who was sincere in his illusions, since he appeared to have believed that he had conversations with heavenly messengers and so forth. Hill’s portrait would not be one that pictured Joseph as a liar and charlatan, as had Brodie, but as someone sincerely religious—though still someone who was not a genuine prophet.

“Mischievous and Manipulative Historians”—Whatever Happened to Detachment and Objectivity?

In 1970 Brodie read a lecture in Salt Lake City that carried the title “Can We Manipulate the Past?”271 Marvin Hill reviewed this lecture in an essay entitled “The Manipulation of History,”272 and he argued that it might make little difference to the Saints “if they are told that some of the divine books have been altered, or even that the accepted view of the origin of one of their books might have to be revised.”273 Perhaps Hill had in mind the Book of Mormon or it may have been the book of Abraham. In either case, he was wrong. Hugh Nibley got it right when he argued that the Book of Mormon “must be read as an ancient, not as a modern book. Its mission, as described by the book itself, depends in great measure for its efficacy on its genuine antiquity.”274

270 Hill, “Secular or Sectarian History?” 96.
271 This lecture was then published by the Center for Studies of the American West, at the University of Utah.
273 Ibid., 97.
What Brodie apparently had in mind in the question posed in the title of her lecture, was that

men in positions of power can and do manipulate written history for purposes of social control. It is the job of the historian, she affirmed, quoting the Cambridge historian J. H. Plumb, to “cleanse the story of mankind from those deceiving visions of a purposeful past,” thus preventing it from being put to ruthless use by willful members of the establishment.275

Brodie was obviously opposed to “men in power” who she thought manipulate the past “to sanctify authority, to justify their policies, to change the direction and destiny of whole nations.”276 But there are various forms of authority and power and one of those that is deeply involved in manipulating the past just happens to be the secular, liberal Establishment. She was especially fond of pointing to churchmen whom she accused of manipulating the past for their own purposes.277 Unfortunately, she preferred not to “talk about how mischievous and manipulative historians can be.”278

Were Brodie’s own literary ventures not at least in part efforts to control the future by manipulating the Mormon past? Instead of engaging in a healthy and honest look at her own agenda, she was admittedly eager—much to her credit, I must add—to defend the history profession, though she granted that “historians may seem mischievous and destructive to churchmen, and especially to politicians. Historians,” she granted, “are dangerous.”279 She was right, of course, though in an ironic way. But how could they be dangerous, given the controlling mythology in which they picture themselves as dispassionate, detached, objective—merely

275 Brodie, “Can We Manipulate the Past?” 4.
276 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
letting the facts speak their truth through them as neutral observers?280

The Great Divide Revisited—No Middle Ground on the Crucial Issues

Brodie was closer to the truth when she and Morgan insisted on the existence of a Great Divide that separates the way accounts will be fashioned about the Mormon past. On one side of this Great Divide are those who insist on secular, naturalistic accounts of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims, and on the other are those who are genuinely open to the possibility that angels may sometimes bring books and so forth.

Until recently, as I have shown in my review of the reviews on No Man Knows, it has been fashionable for anti-Mormons, cultural Mormons, and their gentile allies, to advance a mythology in which what they call “objectivity,” and hence some privileged access to the truth about what really happened, was available only to those on the secular, naturalistic (and atheist) side of the Great Divide. This assumption is pure rubbish.

Hill read the report by John Hutchens of a conversation he had with Brodie that was published in the New York Times on 20 January 1946 as saying that “her research was two-thirds completed before she discovered that Joseph Smith was an imposter.”281 But what Brodie told that reporter was that “she had examined two thirds of the materials before she arrived at her thesis that until a certain point in his career Smith was an imposter.”282 What she came to believe is that Joseph was a liar and charlatan at the beginning when he started telling tales about visits with angels and plates containing an ancient history, but that at some point he began, more or less, to believe his own lies. Brodie was two-thirds of the way through her research when she hit on this thesis, and hence it was at this point that she had more or less settled on the

280 For a constructive critique of this professional mythology, see Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
281 Hill, “Secular or Sectarian History?” 80.
details of the explanation she would advance in her book. But she started out fully convinced that Joseph Smith was not a prophet.

It is a mistake to see Brodie, as Hill does, as one disillusioned when she looked into the Mormon past and hence one whose historical inquiries caused her to cease being a believer. She does not appear to have been "a disgruntled ex-Mormon striking back at a 'myth' told her in her childhood," as Hill claimed. That explanation might better fit Hill than Brodie. And if so, then we have an explanation for his own equivocations, ambiguous formulations, and shifting of opinions. Hill was right when he insisted that more than anything else it is what the historian brings to the quest for understanding of the past, what he calls "assumptions about the nature of the world and man's place in it," which he sees resting "in the last analysis upon personal predilection, not historical evidence," that determines the kind of stories that will be fashioned.

Perhaps if Hill had noticed that what he sensed were Brodie's "naturalistic assumptions," in various ways color, regulate, or even determine how one comes out on the question of whether the Book of Mormon is an authentic ancient history and whether Joseph Smith was God's prophet, then he might have been somewhat more thoughtful and even more cautious about adopting assumptions that necessarily place him on the secular (and from my perspective the wrong) side of the Great Divide. Consequently, he might not have devoted his career to looking for a plausible middle ground between genuine prophet and faker.

But perhaps the problem stems from an enthrallment with what Hill seems to recognize as the assumptions of professional historians. Both secularized historians and those with different confessional commitments will bring to their inquiries into Mormon things biases and understanding that either fundamentally differ from or flatly contradict those held by the faithful. That is to be expected. Hence we can expect gentiles to write differently about the Restoration than will faithful Latter-day Saints. Surely a seasoned Latter-day Saint—one who has genuinely experienced God's gifts—need not yield to the temptation to adopt the

283 Hill, "Brodie Revisited," 79.
284 Ibid., 72.
285 Ibid.
skeptical posture inherent in the currently dominant intellectual fashions at work among those who tend to mock divine things from their lofty perches in highly secularized academic institutions.

Some Strange Signs of Squeamishness about Brodie

*No Man Knows* has served as an icon for cultural Mormons anxiously seeking for a peg on which to hang their unbelief. But since her work has been rather thoroughly examined, and its weaknesses made known, an open reliance on her book or its arguments has been politically unwise, except in RLDS circles. I will offer one example of this squeamishness about Brodie. A good specimen is provided by D. Michael Quinn, a former Mormon historian.

After noting that Joseph Smith’s neighbors in Palmyra “testified that during the spring of 1820 Smith became a seer in quest of buried treasure,”286 Quinn adds that “by all accounts [Joseph] Smith continued as both farm boy and treasure seer for years until he announced that he had obtained gold plates.”287

---

286 D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 2 vols., *Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 1:3. The neighbors Quinn has in mind are Joshua Stafford and Willard Chase. Their rather bizarre “statements” were collected or written by Philastus Hurlbut, who had briefly been a member of the fledgling Church of Christ but was excommunicated for conduct unbecoming a Saint. The gossip collected by Hurlbut was eventually included in Howe’s *Mormonism Unvailed*, 240, 258. Howe’s book is the mother of all anti-Mormon books. Whatever else one might say about the gossip published by Howe, it should be noted its reliability is open to question.

287 Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 1:3. It is therefore not clear what he means by “all accounts,” since he cites secondary works in a lengthy note (p. 270 n. 16). There are no newspaper accounts, letters, or diaries that hint that Joseph Smith as “farm boy” was a “treasure” seeker prior to the publication of such charges by Obadiah Dogberry (aka Abner Cole) beginning in June and July 1830. Cole published his *Palmyra Reflector* in Grandin’s print shop where the book of Mormon was being readied for publication, and he violated the copyright for the Book of Mormon when he published excerpts in January 1830 in his *Palmyra Reflector*. He ceased doing this only after an ugly confrontation with Joseph Smith. Cole responded by charging Joseph with being involved in “magic” and “treasure hunting.” Hence not all contemporary sources and especially not the first published sources made this claim. Instead, the earlier newspaper accounts essentially tell Joseph’s story from his and his followers’
This is, of course, pure Brodie. But Quinn does not at this point cite Brodie. Why not? Perhaps because to do so would invite criticism. Instead, Quinn claims that “scholars have long recognized that the first vision account was not published or used in any proselytizing tract until the 1840s and that it was not used regularly as a Mormon proselytizing tool until fifty years after [Joseph] Smith’s theophany.” Quinn adds that, “for this reason, Fawn M. Brodie . . . dismissed [Joseph] Smith’s visionary claims as ‘sheer invention.’”

What Quinn does not point out is that Brodie began by claiming that Joseph Smith concocted the story of his initial vision around 1838. As I have demonstrated, Brodie was subsequently forced to qualify her assertion. In 1971 she shifted to claiming that the very early accounts provided by Joseph Smith seemed to her to be contradictory (pp. 408–10), which was clearly not her position in 1945. She also argued that “to the nondevout the differences” between the various early accounts of the initial vision “are evidence of Joseph Smith’s exuberant talent for improvisation before a stimulating audience and his lack of care about the consistency of detail” (p. 409). She claimed that these reports supported her “original speculation that the first vision, if not an invention, was an evolutionary fantasy beginning in ‘a half-remembered dream stimulated by the early revival excitement and reinforced by the rich folklore of visions circulating in his neighborhood’” (p. 409).

Instead of setting forth and then confronting the assumptions upon which Brodie rested her argument, Quinn tries to explain why he ignores her work. His explanations are instructive.

perspective, including, as Quinn notes, even statements to the effect that Joseph Smith “had seen God frequently and personally.” Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy, 1:3, citing the Palmyra Reflected, 14 February 1831.

288 Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy, 1:3.

289 Ibid., 271 n. 18.

290 Exactly what audience might have stimulated Joseph Smith to fabricate the accounts of his initial vision, Brodie does not say. Was it his scribe, a visit from Robert Matthias, otherwise known as “Joshua, the Jewish minister,” or a conversation with Alexander Neibaur? If such was Joseph’s audience, his accounts were otherwise unknown until long after 1945.

291 One may suspect that Quinn is more dependent upon Brodie than he is willing to admit openly.
In one context, after Quinn denounces what he considers the "sins"—his word—of the traditional Latter-day Saint view of the Mormon past, and the "dishonesty"—again his word—of the "apologists" for these traditional understandings, he baldly asserts that "Brodie’s erudite and literary biography has [much] in common with the sins of traditional Mormon history."292 Quinn then opines that what he pejoratively labels the traditional Latter-day Saint view of the Mormon past therefore lacks the virtues—including the "functional objectivity," whatever that might be—of what he ambiguously labels the "New Mormon History."293 Quinn’s feels that Brodie “discussed fundamental issues of Joseph Smith’s life without taking his religious claims seriously and filtered her evidence through the perspective that the Mormon prophet was at best a ‘parapath’ and at worst a charlatan.”294 Quinn is, of course, as I have already shown, wrong about Brodie’s arguing that Joseph Smith was a “parapath.” That was the view held by Bernard DeVoto, which was strongly opposed by Brodie and Dale Morgan. They preferred, instead, the notion that Joseph was a conscious liar and charlatan. But a number of those Quinn indiscriminately celebrates as virtuous “New Mormon Historians,” including, among others, Klaus J. Hansen, Mark P. Leone, and Lawrence Foster,295 hold that Joseph Smith was at least some sort of charlatan. Foster has also identified what he considers Joseph’s pathology, which he thinks was manic depression.296

292 D. Michael Quinn, “Editor’s Introduction,” New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past, ed. D. Michael Quinn (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), xiv n. 7. Quinn’s opinion is somewhat like Hill’s, since both hold that the chief difficulty in Brodie’s approach to the Mormon past is that she sees the fundamental issues in either “prophet” or “not prophet” terms.


294 Ibid.

295 Ibid., xiv-xvii n. 8. Quinn’s list of favorite authors should be compared with the listing found in his “On Being a Mormon Historian (and Its Aftermath),” in Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 99–101 n. 12, and also 97 n. 5.

In another context Quinn attempts to justify his reluctance to cite or otherwise openly confront *No Man Knows*:

Some may wonder why I rarely cite Brodie, whose biography has remained in print for fifty years due to the respect and popularity it has among non-Mormon readers. Despite her erudition, skillful prose, and insights, Brodie’s biography is flawed by its inattention to crucial archival materials and by her penchant for filtering evidence and analysis through the perspective that the Mormon prophet was either a “parapath” who believed his own lies or a fraud.297

Once again Quinn wrongly charges Brodie with holding that Joseph Smith was a “parapath.” Yet some of his opinions on Brodie’s work are, of course, solidly grounded. He is, however, just a trifle confused on certain issues. For instance, he cites, quotes, and relies upon essays written by Robert Hullinger, Rodger I. Anderson, Michael Marquardt, and the late Reverend Wesley P. Walters, all sectarian anti-Mormons. He also seems fond of secular anti-Mormon writers like George D. Smith and Dan Vogel. None of these writers are any less hostile to the truth claims upon which the Restoration rests than was Brodie.

Much like Brodie, these writers approach Joseph Smith with naturalistic assumptions. They also filter “evidence” through a network of secular assumptions. They may either have their own brand of “religion” that they are pushing or they may eschew faith in God altogether. Why, then, the defensiveness—even a public display of squeamishness—about citing or otherwise dealing with Brodie, when one has no qualms whatsoever in citing these other individuals? Why not take a consistent approach to those who advance naturalistic explanations of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon? Is it that to acknowledge openly and honestly even some dependence upon Brodie tends to lessen one’s authority in the Mormon intellectual community?298 Perhaps Quinn

---

298 Quinn would benefit from a careful reading of the various versions of Brodie’s argument and also from a close attention to commentaries on Brodie.
is innocent of the bias of the anti-Mormons he often quotes with approval, or he may not anticipate criticism when he holds hands with the current crop of secular or even sectarian anti-Mormons.299

Quinn’s assessment of Brodie suffers much from inattention to crucial archival materials such as the papers of Dale L. Morgan, Madeline Reeder McQuown, Bernard DeVoto, and Juanita Brooks, as well as those of Brodie herself. Careful attention to these materials might have provided him with a more accurate understanding of Brodie’s approach to Joseph Smith and they might also have directed his attention to the role of secular, naturalistic assumptions in the writings of some of those he indiscriminately celebrates as virtuous revisionists or “New Mormon Historians.”

Getting the Saints’ Attention—Back to the Essentials

More than anyone else, it seems, Brodie drew the attention of the Saints to the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s account of its coming forth. For this she is to be congratulated, whatever else one might think about her treatment of Mormon things. Though it was certainly not her intention, Brodie almost single-handedly managed to focus the attention of Latter-day Saints on the crucial historical foundations of their faith. She has thereby helped an entire generation of Latter-day Saint historians to devote careful attention to what can be found about the Mormon past in libraries and archives. Brodie also stimulated research into the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon, as well as into the notion, which she helped polish, that Joseph Smith was the author of the Book of Mormon. Though this explanation has not gone away, it has come more and more under critical scrutiny and seems even less plausible now than it did in 1945, when Brodie brushed aside the Spalding-Rigdon Theory and replaced it, at least in gentile and

299 Sandra and Jerald Tanner, for example, know more about Quinn than they are willing to let on in public. Why do they not expose some of his recent antics in their gossipy newsletter? Is it that they find it useful for their own partisan reasons to leave Quinn alone because they wish to use his current quarrels with Latter-day Saints for their own partisan advantage? So much for their concern with truth.
cultural Mormon circles, with a somewhat refurbished version of
the original anti-Mormon Smith Theory.

For reasons that are only too painfully obvious, it seems that it
takes bigger and better anti-Mormon books to stimulate—even
force—the Saints to take their founding stories and texts seriously.
If this is true, and I believe that it is, some may begin to see the
hand of God in all of this. Whatever her own self-understanding, I
see Brodie’s role as providential.
Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend is intended to be a tool to enable Christians to make a Mormon seriously examine his or her faith. In the introduction, several techniques are outlined to formulate a logical attack on Latter-day Saint beliefs. Hints are included on making the argument go the reader’s way, even when he or she confronts a Mormon who is able to refute the book’s claims. Here Mr. McKeever sets up a no-win test for such a Mormon. The Mormon’s answer must pass three tests, in that it is:

- biblical, i.e., the answer must be found in the Bible, or it is invalid;
- logical, i.e., the answer must conform to what McKeever believes, or it is not logical; or
- in harmony with Mormon history and teachings, i.e., what McKeever and Johnson define as Mormon teachings, based on early statements of various General Authorities (all of whom were converts to the church at that early period) in the Journal of Discourses, the Seer (a publication written by Orson Pratt and portions of which are said to have been condemned by Brigham Young and others at one time),¹ and other early writings outside the standard works of the Church.

The problem with these tests is that not all Latter-day Saint doctrines are found in the Bible as it currently exists and not all statements of Latter-day Saint leaders have been accepted as

¹ See especially Orson Pratt’s confession in JD 7:374, 375; see also Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, intro., notes, and index by James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–), 2:214, 238–39; Millennial Star 17 (12 May 1855): 298; and CHC 4:61–62 n. 16.
official doctrine that is binding upon the membership of the Church. Additionally, the criticisms raised by McKeever and Johnson have logical responses, but if the authors do not like the response or if it does not fit into their doctrinal stricture, it is not logical (to them) and hence not a valid answer.

After the introduction, the contents of the book are organized around what the cover calls “fifteen effective questions”:

- If I accept you as a Christian, will you accept me as a Mormon?
- Which First Vision account should we believe?
- How do you determine doctrinal truth?
- What if the Bible is translated correctly after all?
- If the Bible is corrupt, why doesn’t the LDS Church use the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible?
- Why should a person pray about the Book of Mormon when the Bible says we should not rely on such a subjective test?
- Is it wise to place blind trust in mere mortal men?
- Why does the Mormon church ignore Jesus’ role as prophet of God’s Church?
- Is the Mormon priesthood really of ancient origin?
- Where in the Bible does it say a person has to be worthy to enter the temple?
- What historical support does the Mormon Church have to justify baptism for the dead?
- If Mormon families will be together forever, where will the in-laws live?
- Do you really believe you can become a God?
- Have you ever sinned the same sin twice?
- Are you keeping the whole law?

Let’s take a quick look at a few of the issues raised by McKeever and Johnson.

In the second chapter the authors ask, “Which First Vision account should we believe?” A number of excellent publications treat this oft-answered subject.2 At first glance, the quotations

---

presented in this chapter would seem to be contradictory. However, if one examines the accounts in detail and reads the words within their full context, one finds quite a harmony among them. I think it would be instructive, however, for evangelicals to look critically at accounts of the first vision of Paul. A comparison of Luke’s secondhand account of Paul’s first vision in Acts 9:1–20 with Paul’s own accounts in Acts 22:4–21 and Acts 26:9–20 reveals a number of differences.

Let’s pretend for a minute that I am a first-century critic of the New Testament (using the technique favored by most present-day anti-Mormons). We find, as we read the three accounts, a steady evolution of Paul’s “blessedness,” of the sources of Paul’s calling, and of what the Lord actually said to him.

In Luke’s account, the Lord tells Paul only to go to Damascus to find out what he must do. Ananias sees a vision telling him that Paul is a chosen vessel. The scales fall off Paul’s eyes and his blindness is removed through the laying on of hands.

In the first account spoken by Paul himself (Acts 22), no mention is made of Ananias’s vision. Paul is told of his calling by Ananias (Acts 22:14–15) and then sees a second vision in Jerusalem informing him that he must teach the Gentiles (Acts 22:17–21). Ananias does not lay on hands but only stands and says, “Receive thy sight” (Acts 22:13), making this account appear a little more miraculous than the first. According to this account, Ananias is said to be “a devout man according to the law, having a good report [among] all the Jews that dwelt there” (Acts 22:12). Yet, according to Luke’s account, he is plainly identified as “a certain disciple at Damascus” (Acts 9:10, 19). How could he have a good report among the Jews if he were a Christian? Were not the Christians hated there? How can a man be devout according to the law and a Christian at the same time? Does this not conflict with evangelical doctrine that one is not truly saved if devoted to the law?

In Paul’s second account (Acts 26), instead of Jesus telling Paul to go into Damascus to find out what he must do, Jesus himself tells Paul that he is chosen and will preach to the Gentiles. No

mention is made of Ananias, of Paul’s blindness, of Paul’s second vision, or of Paul’s baptism. Paul puts nearly one hundred words into the mouth of Jesus that are unique in this account, whereas in the other accounts Jesus only identifies him by name and tells him where to go for further instruction.

Additionally, Luke’s account mentions that Saul fell, while the men who were with him were still standing. They too heard the voice, but saw nothing (“no man,” in Luke’s account means “to see nothing”). The account in Acts 22 says that Paul fell, while the men did not hear the voice and did see the light (interestingly, only Paul is blinded by the light). The third account (Acts 26) says that they all fell and that Paul (presumably alone) heard the voice.

The first and third accounts make mention of Jesus, who is being persecuted, while in the second account he identifies himself as Jesus of Nazareth. The first account has the phrase “it’s hard to kick against the pricks” after Paul asks, “Who art thou, Lord?” The second account omits the phrase, while the third account has the phrase before Paul asks the questions. Only in the third account does Paul mention that the person in the vision spoke Hebrew to him. The others are remarkably silent about this, though this material fact better fits the context of the second account.

In Acts 9:19–28, Paul eats and stays awhile with some disciples at Damascus, immediately preaching in the synagogues. The Jews seek to kill him, and he is let down out of the city in a basket. He goes down to Jerusalem to join with the disciples there. Barnabas brings him to the Apostles, where his deeds are recounted to them. He then travels around Jerusalem with them, preaching. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he contradicted the author of Acts; in Galatians 1:15–20, he says that after his vision he did not confer with flesh and blood and did not go to Jerusalem until he had first gone to Arabia and back to Damascus. After three years, he went to see Peter and ended up staying with him fifteen days.

So which first vision account of Paul should we believe? Paul’s vision doesn’t fare well under Mr. McKeever’s standard, does it? If Paul’s memory failed him on exact details from time to time, we should not condemn Joseph Smith for a similar failure, unless of course we wish to adopt a double standard.
What I found even more disappointing about this chapter was its lack of coherence with the chapter title. From pages 27–30 the subject jumps to Moroni, proceeds to speak of the weight of the plates and their composition, and then changes once more on pages 30–31 to Joseph Smith’s 1826 trial. This disorder is characteristic of much of the book.

The third chapter concerns itself with justifying the book’s multitude of quotations from “obscure” reference materials (obscure because not everyone has access to them and many do not have the funds to purchase these sometimes hard-to-obtain sources). McKeever and Johnson try to make the Journal of Discourses appear like a scriptural standard work by displaying, on their page 40, the preface to volume eight, which informs us, “The Journal of Discourses deservedly ranks as one of the standard works of the Church.”

What did the author of the preface actually mean by this statement? The term standard work has several meanings. One of the meanings is “a work of recognized excellence.” Another is “a work that serves as a basis of weight, measure, value, comparison, or judgment.” A third meaning, closely related to the second, is “a work that is officially approved.” The Journal of Discourses was considered a standard work by some in the sense that it was of recognized excellence—it contained the words of God to mankind and to his servants, as well as commentary on the meaning of the scriptures. At no time, however, was the series considered the same as the official standard works, nor was it ever presented to the general Church body for its acceptance as Church doctrine. Joseph Smith even said, “the hymn book, as a new edition, containing a greater variety of hymns, will be shortly published or printed in this place, which I think will be a standard work.” Yet at no time did he ever regard the hymn book as a fundamental source of truth nor as having equal value to the scriptures.

---

3 JD 8:preface.
5 TPJS, 164.
Brigham Young’s statement in the *Journal of Discourses* on how doctrinal truth is determined in the Church is virtually always ignored:

In trying all matters of doctrine, to make a decision valid, it is necessary to obtain a unanimous voice, faith, and decision. In the capacity of a Quorum, the three First Presidents must be one in their voice—the Twelve Apostles must be unanimous in their voice, to obtain a righteous decision upon any matter that may come before them, as you may read in the Doctrine and Covenants. ... Whenever you see these Quorums unanimous in their declaration, you may set it down as true.6

It is a fact that General Authorities have disagreed on a number of issues. Some of these issues were mentioned in the *Journal of Discourses* but have never become official doctrine. Consider also these quotations from Brigham Young:

It is your privilege and duty to live so that you know when the word of the Lord is spoken to you and when the mind of the Lord is revealed to you. ... Suppose I were to teach you a false doctrine, how are you to know it if you do not possess the Spirit of God?7

“Live so that you will know whether I teach you truth or not.” Suppose you are careless and unconcerned, and give way to the spirit of the world, and I am led, likewise, to preach the things of this world and to accept things that are not of God, how easy it would be for me to lead you astray! But I say to you, live so that you will know for yourselves whether I tell the truth or not. That is the way we want all Saints to live. Will you do it? Yes, I hope you will, every one of you.8

The First Presidency have of right a great influence over this people; and if we should get out of the way and lead this people to destruction, what a pity it would

6 *JD* 9:91–92.
7 *JD* 18:72.
8 *JD* 18:248.
be! How can you know whether we lead you correctly or not? Can you know by any other power than that of the Holy Ghost? I have uniformly exhorted the people to obtain this living witness each for themselves; then no man on earth can lead them astray.⁹

How do you know but I am teaching false doctrine? How do you know that I am not counseling you wrong? How do you know but I will lead you to destruction? And this is what I wish to urge upon you—live so that you can discern between the truth and error, between light and darkness, between the things of God and those not of God, for by the revelations of the Lord, and these alone, can you and I understand the things of God...

But to return to my question to the Saints, “How are you going to know about the will and commands of heaven?” By the Spirit of revelation; that is the only way you can know. How do I know but what I am doing wrong? How do I know but what we will take a course for our utter ruin? I sometimes say to my brethren, “I have been your dictator for twenty-seven years”—over a quarter of a century I have dictated this people; that ought to be some evidence that my course is onward and upward. But how do you know that I may not yet do wrong? How do you know but I will bring in false doctrine and teach the people lies that they may be damned?¹⁰

Brigham Young made many such statements, but this should suffice. He was keenly aware of the possibility that he might make a mistake and wanted the Saints to understand that they should not have blind faith in their leaders. He was also disgusted with the idea that men would depend “upon another of their poor, weak, fellow mortals” or “[pin] their faith upon another’s sleeve” for salvation.¹¹

---

⁹ JD 6:100.
¹⁰ JD 14:204-5.
¹¹ JD 1:312.
In fact, contrary to the critics' claims, Brigham Young did not claim infallibility in all things. He once said that "it is not the place for any person to correct any person who is superior to them, but ask the Father in the name of Jesus to bind him up from speaking false principles. I have known many times I have preached wrong."  

In the fourth chapter the authors quote from various books on the textual transmission of the Old and New Testaments and from Josh McDowell’s *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. The claim that the authors advance thereby is that the Bible does not contradict itself or have any major textual problems. Anyone, however, who has studied the Septuagint or the Dead Sea Scrolls or has read the Bible carefully knows that from time to time discrepancies occur. Many of these can be reconciled after a bout with the original languages, but that usually only serves to prove that the Saints were correct in their view after all. Other discrepancies are not so easy to reconcile.

For example, the evidence of the Septuagint, or Greek Old Testament, taken with the Dead Sea Scrolls, reveals at least two different recensions of the text of Jeremiah, one of which is about 12.5% shorter. The authors never tell the reader that.  

McKeever and Johnson also want the reader to believe that the talmudic standard of absolute rectitude required in copying biblical manuscripts played a part in the preservation of the text, and that because of it later manuscripts can be regarded as just as authoritative as the originals. The reality is that this standard came into use after the rabbis determined a standardized form of the Hebrew text. The Dead Sea Scrolls more than refute the supposition that the standard of the rabbis was practiced any earlier than the Common Era. At any rate, even if we were to trace the manuscript history to original texts, we still would have only the abridgments of the composite texts of the ancient prophets. And for the New Testament we have no ancient manuscripts that date before A.D. 200 that can be used to determine the original text of the New Testament.

---

12 Thomas Bullock minutes, 8 May 1854, Church Historical Department.
The authors proceed to give their reasons why the priesthood in the Latter-day Saint Church is not ancient (pp. 83–91). Briefly, the authors try to make a case that the Aaronic Priesthood was done away in Christ; hence there would no longer be a need for it. Because of this “fact,” the Latter-day Saint Church cannot claim it. The authors then assert that Jesus is the only high priest after the order of Melchizedek (p. 91) and that “Since the Book of Mormon also fails to mention the Melchizedek Priesthood, it appears that the Nephites were also acting without proper authority and did not represent ‘the true church’” (p. 84). While it is true that the Book of Mormon does not mention the priesthood of Melchizedek per se, the Book of Mormon does make clear that this is the priesthood referred to. For example, Alma speaks of many priests who were ordained after the order of the Son of God (Alma 13:1–2, 6–11). He then refers to “Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order” (Alma 13:14). If this is not a clear reference to the Melchizedek Priesthood being held by the Nephites, I don’t know what is.

Because the Melchizedek Priesthood was in full operation among the Nephite people, very likely with no Levites of the line of Aaron among them, there should be no mention of the Aaronic Priesthood in the Book of Mormon. Obviously the authors do not understand that not all aspects of current Latter-day Saint practice are found among ancient peoples. And why wouldn’t we expect that? We are in what is known as the dispensation of the fulness of times, in which all the keys of the priesthood in every past dispensation are to be united as one. In other words, just because an ancient people did not possess the Aaronic Priesthood does not mean that they were not of the true church. Paul taught “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10). Joseph Smith further explained in the Doctrine and Covenants:

It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time.
And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. (D&C 128:18)

Several questions arise when the evangelical position is examined. First of all, how does one interpret the scriptures as teaching that the Aaronic Priesthood is fulfilled (or completely abolished, as most evangelicals understand it) when there is no explicit verse of scripture that supports this view? How does one interpret passages like Exodus 40:15 and Numbers 25:13, which declare quite clearly that the Aaronic Priesthood was to be an *everlasting priesthood* to be passed down from generation to generation? How does one deal with Isaiah 66:18–22, which prophesies that in the end time there would again be priests and Levites or, as others translate it, levitical priests? Knowledgeable Latter-day Saints are perfectly at home with these ideas.14 The question is, where will these levitical priests get their authority? “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Hebrews 5:4). Aaron was called of God by a prophet. Therefore the keys of the levitical priesthood would of necessity be upon the earth when the time came for the complete fulfillment of these prophecies, as well as a prophet to call the levitical priests to service. If these prophecies are not to be fulfilled, then Isaiah, Malachi, and Ezekiel are false prophets. Imagine the mental havoc this could cause. One might even call into question the status of Christ as Son of God because he quoted Isaiah often. If Isaiah was a false prophet, should not Jesus have recognized that fact?

The other possibility is that someone later tampered with the biblical texts just mentioned. However, this creates a major dilemma for evangelicals. If these texts were interpolated, then that would mean that passages with heavy doctrinal impact were changed. Either way you look at it, the Latter-day Saints are right. Either one must accept the view that the Bible has been altered in a major way or one must accept the Latter-day Saint teaching that

14 See also Malachi 3:3–4 and Ezekiel 40–47.
15 See, for example, *TPJS*, 171–72.
the Aaronic Priesthood will play a major part in the events of the latter days. Under these conditions it is perfectly logical for Mormons to believe as they do.

After citing Alma 13:10, the authors quote from a Doctrine and Covenants student manual and then say that the references are "a clear contradiction of the biblical pattern" (p. 90). The authors here compare apples with oranges and expect the reader to agree with them. Their comparison of statements from Church publications with history is not accurate, since the high priests mentioned in the Church publications are after the order of Melchizedek, while the high priests mentioned in Luke 3:2 and throughout most of the Old Testament are of the order of Aaron. The two offices are completely different in their function and authority, as anyone with an understanding of Latter-day Saint doctrine would know.

I will explore one final question on this issue before continuing. The authors earlier stated that there was only one high priest after the order of Melchizedek—Jesus Christ. They completely sidestep the fact that Melchizedek himself was a priest of that manner, making at least two. How many priesthoods are there? All will agree that the Bible mentions only two priesthood orders, the Aaronic and Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:11). Another question must now be asked. Before the Aaronic Priesthood was instituted, an indeterminate number of priests who "come near to the Lord" were mentioned (Exodus 19:22, 24). If the Bible lists only two priesthoods and the Aaronic Priesthood did not yet exist, to which order of priesthood did these priests belong? Logic dictates that these individuals held the Melchizedek Priesthood. These anti-Mormon authors might counter this statement by asking, "If the Melchizedek Priesthood was among the people at this time, what need was there for the Lord to give the Aaronic Priesthood?" Of course, if they read their Bibles more carefully, they might know that the law of Moses (and its accompanying lineal priesthood) was revealed because of the transgressions of the children of Israel (Galatians 3:19).

The authors dedicate some pages to the concepts of the temple and temple worthiness (pp. 94–96). In this chapter, the authors again compare apples with oranges. They contrast the differences between practices in the Jerusalem temple and modern Latter-day
Saint temples. In addition to belaboring the obvious, the authors make serious mistakes. The reason for the differences should be apparent, since the authors have been tirelessly claiming throughout the book that sacrifices of animals under the law of Moses have been done away with because of the sacrifice of the Savior. Could this be why there is such a difference between the two types of temples?

The authors speak of temple recommends and then quote the story found in Luke 18:11–14 of the Pharisee and the publican who went to pray in the temple (pp. 94–95). The authors then ask, “Certainly, if temple ‘recommends’ were required in biblical times, this publican would not have qualified under today’s Mormon guidelines. If worthiness has always been a requirement to enter a temple, how did the publican of Luke 18 get in?” (p. 95). Had the authors only turned to the Greek text, they would not have made the errors that they did. The Greek text says that the two individuals went up to the ἱερὸν or hieron. This is different from the ναός or naos. Although the two words are both translated temple in our Bibles, they actually have distinct meanings. The hieron is the general word that means sanctuary or temple and includes the temple precinct with its buildings, courts, and walls. The naos was the temple proper, or divine habitation. Richard C. Trench, in distinguishing these two terms, wrote:

The distinction between hieron and naos helps us better understand several New Testament passages. When Zacharias entered into “the temple of the Lord” to burn incense, the people who awaited his return and who stood “outside” (Luke 1:10) also were in the temple—the hieron—though Zacharias alone entered the naos, the “temple” in its narrower sense. We often read of Christ teaching “in the temple” (Matt. 26:55; Luke 21:37; John 8:20), and we might wonder how long conversations could have been maintained there without interrupting the service of God. But this “temple” is always the hieron, the porches and porticoes of the temple that were intended for such purposes. Christ never entered the naos during his earthly ministry, since that right was reserved for the priests. Jesus drove the money-changers and the buyers and
sellers with their sheep and oxen from the *hieron*, not from the *naos*. Even those profane men had not dared to establish themselves in the temple in its strictest sense (Matt. 21:12; John 2:14).

Keeping in mind the distinction between *hieron* and *naos* helps us understand how the prophet Zacharias could be slain “between the temple and the altar” (Matt. 23:35). Here the word translated “temple” is *naos*, which helps to answer the questions: “Was not the altar in the temple? And if so, how could any locality be described as *between* the two?” The brazen altar alluded to in Matthew 23:35 was located in the *hieron*, not in the *naos*. It was situated “*in the court of the house of the Lord,*” where the sacred historian (2 Chron. 24:21) lays the scene of this murder, not in the *naos*.

Admittedly, the two words seem to be used synonymously in a very few instances. However, when one understands the cultural background of the situation that Jesus describes in Luke 18, it becomes clear that it occurred in one of the outer courts, not in the temple proper. The statement “standing afar off” (Luke 18:13) in the passage makes clear that the Pharisee and the publican were not close together. To think that the Pharisee, who thought himself superior to the publican, would have allowed an unclean person to stand in the sacred precincts without an uproar is asking too much. If Latter-day Saint standards were in effect during biblical times, the publican would certainly not need a temple recommend to pray on the temple grounds, so the authors’ point is simply moot, as is their comparison of the purposes for the temple. Since the final sacrifice of Christ, the temple is no longer a place to purge away sins—the atonement takes care of that. Today the temple is a sacred place in which to grow closer to our Heavenly Father, while we do work for those who cannot do it for themselves and while we learn more of the ways of the Lord.

---

The authors also debunk the Latter-day Saint practice of baptism for the dead (p. 97–105). They allege a lack of historical support for the doctrine, while quoting from Milton R. Hunter:

With so much expense incurred and effort given to baptism for the dead by the LDS Church, it seems peculiar that there is a major lack of biblical backing to support this keystone Mormon doctrine. Milton R. Hunter, a former member of the First Council of the Seventy, explained one possible reason when he said:

This doctrine was so well known by Jesus’ apostles and the members of the Christian Church during the Apostolic Age that Paul need not explain the doctrine in detail when he wrote to the Saints.

Again the Mormon scholar must turn to the argument of silence. If Paul did not need to explain “well known” doctrines in detail, it is a wonder such important doctrines as faith, grace, and the atonement of Christ were ever mentioned at all. To the contrary, if baptism for the dead is such a vital doctrine as the Latter-day Saint Church would have its members believe, then one would expect to find many additional biblical references to support it. (p. 104)

First of all, why couldn’t Elder Hunter have been right in this instance? There does not necessarily need to be a great number of biblical references to baptism for the dead, as the authors wish us to believe. The authors are also drawing a conclusion based upon an argument from silence. However, when one understands the circumstances that resulted in the writing of much of the New Testament, the explanation that Elder Hunter gives is quite plausible. Most of the New Testament (indeed, all but one of the letters of Paul) was written to combat false ideologies that kept emerging among the Saints. In each case doctrinal issues involving grace,

---

faith, the relevance of the law to Christians, and the atonement of Christ were hotbeds of theological debate and misunderstanding. It is no wonder that these subjects were mentioned so many times. Contrast this with the lone mention of baptism for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:29. The only reason this was even mentioned at all was to demonstrate the inconsistency between the beliefs and practices of some of the Corinthian Saints. The fact is that in many instances Paul did not go into great detail in discussing the doctrines of God. Why not? Because the Saints already knew and understood these matters. One other fact should be pointed out here. We do not have all the writings of Paul. In 1 Corinthians 5:9, he made mention of a letter he had previously written to the Corinthian Saints. This now-missing letter was important enough to Paul to have the Corinthians refer back to it. It was Paul’s habit to refer to more than one subject in his letters. What else was written in the letter that is now lost to us—the real 1 Corinthians? Could it have had more references to the practice of baptism for the dead? Until that letter is found, it will never be proved that Paul did not teach more on that subject, just as it will never be proved that he did. Interestingly, though, a number of non-Latter-day Saint writers do not have as dim a view of the practice as the authors of Questions. One of them said this:

In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul wrote: “Otherwise, what shall they do who are being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are they being baptized for them” (Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians 15:29). . . .

Once the theological pressures from later possible developments of practice and doctrine are felt less constricting, the text seems to speak plainly enough about a practice within the Church of vicarious baptism for the dead. This is the view of most contemporary critical exegetes.18

Several factors demand due consideration to arrive at a satisfactory interpretation of this much debated passage.

---

1. ὁ βαπτιζόμενοι is a present passive participle. It can only refer to Christian baptism, unless otherwise defined (which it is not). These two facts taken together indicate that the action occurs regularly and is known to every Corinthian saint.

2. τῶν νεκρῶν points to a specific class of the dead, and the words are in the genitive plural, demonstrating that ὑπὲρ is genitive and not accusative as the critics want so desperately to believe. This is significant because some of the critics know that ὑπὲρ in the accusative case means “over” and try to link the practice with pagan and heretic groups that had rites in which adherents were washed over the graves of the dead. Here, the genitive case of the words more than refutes this view and strengthens the Latter-day Saint argument that the action of baptizing takes place in behalf of the dead.

3. According to the *Expositor’s Greek Testament*:

   In following up ver. 29 with the words of ver. 30 (τί καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁλλῶν) Paul associates himself with the action of “those baptised for the dead,” indicating that they and he are engaged on the same behalf. 19


   The objection that the apostle could not have meant anything like a baptism for the benefit of others is exegetically out of place. . . . If Paul had disapproved of it he probably would have written more about it than what this one reference contains. In any case the apostle could hardly derive an argument for the resurrection of the body from a practice of which he did not approve. 20

5. The *Interpreter’s Bible* has this to offer:


Paul turns to an interesting item of Church practice in Corinth and probably elsewhere too. . . . At its best, the vicarious ceremony was a tribute to the spirit of fellowship, of unity, and of solidarity in the community, and as such it would be sure to commend itself to Paul. There are still some survivals of this ancient Christian practice. . . . In a sense, it might be compared with prayers offered for the dead. . . . Perhaps it is as well to leave the matter there. Paul is content to do so, merely pointing to this ancient rite, and incidentally giving us another glimpse into the customary procedures of the early Christian fellowship as they illustrated the truth of the Resurrection.21

The late K. S. Wuest, teacher emeritus of New Testament Greek at Moody Bible Institute, keeping all of this in mind, translated the passage: “Otherwise, what shall those do who are being baptized for the sake of those who are dead. Assuming that the dead are not actually raised up, why then are we being baptized for their sake?”22

Other (non-Mormon) biblical scholars agree. “It seems that in Corinth,” they write, “some Christians would undergo baptism in the name of their deceased non-Christian relatives and friends, hoping that this vicarious baptism might assure them a share in the redemption of Christ.”23 What further need have we to debate this point?

On pages 113–24, the authors attack the Latter-day Saint doctrine that eternal life, in its fullest sense, is synonymous with becoming a god, and they try to show that the idea is impossible. The authors err greatly when they write, “Christianity has never defined eternal life as godhood” (p. 122). A fair assessment of what the Fathers meant when they spoke of one God and when they spoke of the meaning of eternal life can only be gained from

---

21 Interpretar’s Bible, 1 Corinthians (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951–57), 240.
a personal examination of the texts. Following is a cursory synopsis of what was believed about eternal life by the Fathers of the early Christian church (emphasis added):

1. "We have learned that those only are deified who have lived near to God in holiness and virtue."24

2. "The Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself."25

3. "Then having become pure in heart, and near to the Lord, there awaits them restoration to everlasting contemplation; and they are called by the title of gods, being destined to sit on thrones with the other gods that have been first put in their places by the Savior."26

4. "For we shall be even gods, if we shall deserve to be among those of whom He declared, 'I have said, Ye are gods,' and, 'God standeth in the congregation of the gods.' But this comes of His own grace, not from any property in us, because it is He alone who can make gods."27

5. "The first-born of all creation, who is the first to be with God ... is a being of more exalted rank than the other gods beside Him, of whom God is the God, as it is written, 'The God of gods, the Lord, hath spoken and called the earth.' It was by the offices of the first-born that they became gods, for He drew in generous measure that they should be made gods, and He communicated it to them according to His own bounty. ... Now it is possible that some may dislike what we have said representing the Father as the One true God, but admitting other beings besides the true God, who have become gods by having a share of God. They may fear that the glory of Him who surpasses all creation may be lowered."28

6. "The Deity (by condescension) does not diminish anything of the dignity of His divine perfection having made you even God unto his glory."29

24 Justin the Martyr, First Apology 21.
25 Irenaeus, Against Heresies V, preface.
26 Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis VII, 10.
27 Tertullian, Against Hermogenes 5.
28 Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John II, 2–3.
29 Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies X, 30.
Of further embarrassment to the authors is their philosophical jangling about the nature of God (pp. 120–21). They try to explain that it is impossible for a finite being to become infinite. Of course, they seem to forget that “with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). It appears that God as he is known to Mormons is much more powerful than God as he is known to evangelicals because Mormons believe he is able to change our finite nature to an infinite one, while that task is obviously impossible for the God of the evangelicals to accomplish. Scientists say that the bumblebee is aerodynamically incapable of flight. Yet it flies. Just because all the facts are not in does not necessarily mean that a principle is not true.

What is interesting is that the authors place a great deal of emphasis on the present-day meaning of the word infinite. In ancient times the Latin word _infinitum_, the source for the English _infinite_, did not mean what the critics infer. The word simply indicated what is beyond counting. A cursory examination of the Latin Bible text shows that the word is often used to indicate the number of men in a large army. Does that mean that it is truly an infinite number? God is said to have an _infinite_ knowledge. He is also said to know _all_ things. The phrase _all things_ necessarily places a limit upon what can be known. If God knows _all_ things he cannot, therefore, have an _infinite_ knowledge, for if God knows _all_ things there is no more that can be known; hence that knowledge can never be truly _infinite_, in the loose, present-day sense of the word.

The remaining pages are spent attacking the view that works are important in obtaining what the Lord has promised to us and affirming the supposed impossibility of our someday becoming perfect (pp. 125–41). The authors, in essence, say, “Why even bother trying?” They say that Matthew 5:48 cannot be used as a proof-text to show that it is possible for mankind to be perfect because it is in the present tense (p. 138). The basic problem occurs again with the translation of the text. The Greek word in the text of Matthew 5:48, Ἐσεσθε (esesthe), is translated erroneously as _Be perfect_. It is the second person, plural, indicative, future, middle deponent form of the verb εἰμί (eimi). In other words, it means something we must do ourselves—it will not be done for us. We must be actively engaged in the action, but we are not expected to be at that place now. We must press on from this point
forward, expecting the action’s culmination at a future time. In short we must gradually but consistently become perfect, or fully developed, like our Father in Heaven. Only through the ordinances, as administered through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and by the grace of our almighty God can this be accomplished, to the chagrin of our detractors.

I must be honest and say that there are a few positive aspects within Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend. Church doctrine is often misunderstood by Church members, and this book does point out some of these misunderstandings. It also highlights the hubris of assuming superiority based on holding a current temple recommend. It helps us realize that we all could study our scriptures better than we do and, last, but by no means least, it provides a wonderful missionary opportunity. In all seriousness, I personally know of several baptisms that have recently occurred after individuals studied and questioned this book and other writings from the Mormonism Research Ministry. I believe that far more will join the Church when they see the errors of this book; they will know that the anti-Mormon movement cannot be taken seriously, just as this book cannot be taken seriously as a tool to help Latter-day Saints more closely examine their faith, much less abandon it.

Matthew Roper has made an interesting observation, one from which anti-Mormons would do well to learn:

Since 1830, over 2000 anti-Mormon works . . . have been published. Over half of those have been published since 1960 and a third since 1970 alone. It is perhaps significant that during those last thirty years The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has grown faster than at any other time in its history, fulfilling in certain measure the prediction of Brigham Young: “Every time you kick Mormonism you kick it upstairs; You never kick it downstairs. The Lord Almighty so orders it.”

---


Reviewed by William J. Hamblin

“Everything Is Everything”: Was Joseph Smith Influenced by Kabbalah?

For everything has everything in itself, and sees everything in everything else, so that everything is everywhere, and everything is everything and each thing is everything.

Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.8.4

The Mormon History Association recently awarded Lance S. Owens’s “Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection” its Best Article Award for 1995. With such an imprimatur the

---

1 Translation mine. The Loeb translation reads: “Each therefore has everything in itself and sees all things in every other, so that all are everywhere and each and everyone is all.” Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1978–84), 5:248–49. Stephen MacKenna’s translation reads: “And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all.” *The Enneads* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 414. I would like to thank Becky Schulthies for assistance in researching this paper, and George Mitton and Daniel Peterson for helpful comments. I would also like to thank Robert L. Millet, Stephen E. Robinson, and Larry E. Dahl.

article deserves a closer critical evaluation than it has apparently heretofore received.\footnote{Owens anticipated a “violent response from traditionalists” (p. 119), perhaps tacitly recognizing that his thesis is not immune to criticism.} Owens’s basic thesis is that

Through his associations with ceremonial magic as a young treasure seer, [Joseph] Smith contacted symbols and lore taken directly from Kabbalah. In his prophetic translation of sacred writ, his hermeneutic method was in nature Kabbalistic. With his initiation into Masonry, he entered a tradition born of the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition. These associations culminated in Nauvoo, the period of his most important doctrinal and ritual innovations. During these last years, he enjoyed friendship with a European Jew [Alexander Neibaur] well-versed in the standard Kabbalistic works and possibly possessing in Nauvoo an unusual collection of Kabbalistic books and manuscripts. By 1844 Smith not only was cognizant of Kabbalah, but enlisted theosophic concepts taken directly from its principal text in his most important doctrinal sermon, the “King Follett Discourse.” (p. 119)

Although important elements of his attempt to link Joseph Smith to kabbalism are new, Owens’s overall conclusions broadly parallel those found in D. Michael Quinn’s Early Mormonism and the Magic World View and John L. Brooke’s recent The Refiner’s Fire.\footnote{D. Michael Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987); John L. Brooke, The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).} Owens feels that Brooke’s work is “a well constructed summary of this little understood intersection” of hermeticism, alchemy, and radical Christianity.\footnote{Lance S. Owens, “The Divine Transmutation,” review of The Refiner’s Fire, by John L. Brooke, Dialogue 27/4 (1994): 187.} He sees Brooke’s work as “a valuable contribution” showing that “the [hermetic/alchemy] tradition’s parallels in Mormonism are many and striking.” For Owens, Brooke’s is “a seminal work, a study that will be considered by every scholar who henceforth attempts to retell the story...
of Joseph Smith.” Owens feels Brooke “draws similar conclusions” to his own (p. 160 n. 83). However, neither Quinn’s, Brooke’s, nor Owens’s methods and conclusions are beyond criticism, and Owens’s work suffers from many of the same problems found in Brooke. As this study will show, because of numerous problems with evidence and analysis, none of Owens’s major propositions have been substantiated.

**Problems with Sources**

Owens’s article begins with a lengthy introduction to the “occult” sciences. Indeed, over half of his article (pp. 117–54) is a rather pedestrian review of secondary sources on the matter.

---

6 Owens, “The Divine Transmutation,” 188, 190. Owens is not entirely positive about Brooke’s work. He criticizes Brooke for “pursuing the trail of counterfeiting” (p. 190), and for “entirely ignore[ing] the less world-affirmative elements of both classical and Renaissance hermeticism” (p. 188). Nonetheless, Owens’s overall review is quite positive. Cf. Owens’s comments in a similar vein in “America’s Hermetic Prophet,” 63–64. Owens does not cite Brooke in his article, since Brooke’s work appeared only as Owens’s article was going to press (p. 160 n. 83). As will be noted below, Owens relies on Quinn extensively and uncritically.


8 It is unfortunate that Owens uses the misleading term *occult* to describe the esoteric tradition. In modern parlance *occult* often conjures up images of demonic black magic, while its original meaning was merely “hidden” or “esoteric.” For a late twentieth-century audience kabbalism and hermeticism are much better described as esoteric rather than occult.
Unfortunately, the background material presented by Owens is often dated or misrepresented. Owens’s use of sources, both primary and secondary, is problematic at a number of levels. First, he ignores nearly all earlier writings by Latter-day Saint scholars on the significance of the possible parallels between Latter-day Saint ideas and the Western esoteric tradition. There is, in fact, a growing body of Latter-day Saint literature that has examined some of these alleged parallels, and presented possible interpretations of the relationship between the esoteric tradition and the gospel. Why is Nibley not even mentioned by Owens, despite the fact that he has been writing on this subject for four decades?9 Robert F. Smith’s discussion of many of these issues is ignored.10 A recent publication, Temples in the Ancient World, contains much material that could have been considered by Owens.11

Perhaps Owens feels that such studies by “traditionalists” (i.e., believers [p. 119]) are not worthy of his attention. If so, it still provides him no excuse for his failure to consult many of the most recent and important works on the Western esoteric tradition.

---

9 Hugh W. Nibley, “Prophets and Gnostics,” and “Prophets and Mystics,” in The World and the Prophets, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987 [1st ed. 1954]). 63–70, 98–107; “One Eternal Round: The Hermetic Version,” in Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 379–433, a speech originally presented in 1989 that covers much of the same ground as does Owens, though in less detail and with different conclusions. Nibley’s forthcoming book, also tentatively entitled One Eternal Round, will further develop this theme. Much of Nibley’s other work also abounds with references to early Gnosticism, which has important links to the hermetic and alchemical traditions of late antiquity.

10 Robert F. Smith, “Oracles and Talismans, Forgery and Pansophia: Joseph Smith, Jr. as a Renaissance Magus.” This 191-page unpublished manuscript (dated August 1987) was widely circulated through the Latter-day Saint “underground.” Although idiosyncratic, it is informed and perceptive and contains a number of interesting ideas. It should at least have been consulted by someone studying the relationship between Mormonism and the esoteric traditions.

11 Donald W. Parry, ed., Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994); my article, “Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism,” 440–76, examines some of the antecedents to Kabbalah and briefly alludes to the possible connections between Kabbalah and Masonry, 461–63. Cf. Hamblin, Peterson, and Milton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 55 n. 95 and 57 n. 98, for additional references to Latter-day Saint studies that should have been consulted by Owens.
by leading non-Mormon scholars. Despite the fact that serious academic study of the esoteric tradition is a relatively recent phenomenon, many of Owens’s secondary sources are over a quarter of a century old—some over a century old.

The absence of any discussion of astrology is interesting, since one of Owens’s major sources, D. Michael Quinn, lays some stress on it.12 Does Owens feel that Quinn’s claims of astrological influences on Joseph Smith are unfounded? If so, he should have mentioned this. For his understanding of Christian Kabbalah, Owens relies almost entirely on two books by Frances Yates, both of which are nearly two decades old and neither of which deals directly with Christian kabbalism (pp. 127–34).13 Owens’s bibliography on hermeticism is equally inadequate, again citing only Yates (pp. 129–34). He quotes the Hermetica either in the dated and inadequate translation of Walter Scott, or from secondary sources.14 None of the recent, often revolutionary studies are

---

12 Quinn, Early Mormonism, 58–66, 71–78, 213–19, and other references in the index.


On John Dee, Owens’s only source is the three-decades-old work by Peter French (p. 133), again ignoring the recent flourishing of Dee studies. Rosicrucian studies fair no better. Owens would have us believe that “the best recent scholarly summary of the Rosicrucian movement is Francis [sic] Yates” (p. 138 n. 48), ignoring the recent revolution in Rosicrucian studies. Even in his discussion of Freemasonry (pp. 149–54), generally confirmed Reitzenstein’s harsh verdict on the text [of Scott], which is a jungle of excisions, interpolations and transpositions so distantly related to the manuscripts that Scott’s translation can only be regarded a translation of Scott, not of the Hermetic authors,” Hermetica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), liii. Note, however, that Scott’s three volumes of commentary “remain indispensable” (ibid). Owens’s main secondary source is Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, a superb though now dated study.

Two indispensable new studies are Garth Fowden, The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and Copenhagen, Hermetica, which provides a brief intellectual history of the study of the Hermetica, with full bibliography (pp. xlv–lix). Elizabeth Ann Ambrose, The Hermetica: An Annotated Bibliography (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1992) is also important.


Owens refers to Frances Yates, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment (London: Routledge, 1972). At a recent conference on the Rosicrucian Enlightenment (Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic, September 1995), a leading Rosicrucian scholar, Adam McLean, noted that Yates’s work, though pioneering and brilliant, is now a quarter century old and is being superseded by the discovery and interpretation of many new documents (lecture given 11 September 1995, tape recording in the possession of George L. Mitton). Especially important is the work of Carlos Gilly and others at the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica at Amsterdam, which is expected to result in major new studies on Rosicrucian origins. Provisionally, see Carlos Gilly, ed., Cinelia Rhodostaurotica: Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 entstandenen Handschriften und Drucke (Amsterdam: Pelikaan, 1995). See also studies by Christopher McIntosh, The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology and Rituals of an Occult Order, 2nd
which is quite important to his overall thesis, Owens relies on dated studies and late nineteenth-century Masonic mythologies (p. 149 n. 65),\(^{18}\) ignoring the seminal recent work of Stevenson and others.\(^{19}\)

Owens’s failure to use the broad range of recent studies on the esoteric tradition is compounded by an occasional uncritical evaluation of the limited secondary sources he does use.\(^{20}\) Furthermore, for the most part, Owens’s account of the Western esoteric tradition does not rely on primary sources, or even translations of primary sources, but on secondary summaries, which he often misunderstands or misrepresents. This unfamiliarity with both the primary and secondary sources may in part explain the


\(^{20}\) Owens maintains that “Smith’s best overall biography remains Fawn M. Brodie” (“America’s Hermetic Prophet,” 64 n. 3), in spite of the negative reviews the book has received. For a semicentennial retrospective analysis of Fawn Brodie, with full references to reviews, see Louis C. Midgley, “F. M. Brodie— ‘The Fasting Hermit and Very Saint of Ignorance’: A Biographer and Her Legend,” pages 147–230 in this issue of *FARMS Review of Books*. Note the warning of Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 271 n. 18—hardly a Latter-day Saint “apologist”—“Some may wonder why I rarely cite Brodie. . . . Brodie’s biography is flawed by its inattention to crucial archival materials and by her penchant for filtering evidence and analysis through the perspective that the Mormon prophet was either a ‘parapath’ who believed his own lies or a fraud.” Other examples of Owens’s uncritical approach to both primary and secondary sources will be given below.
numerous errors that occur throughout his article (discussed below).

I am certainly not advocating bibliography padding, but the absence of a number of important recent studies from Owens’s notes—many of which transform our understanding of the issues Owens raises—should alert readers to the need to approach many of his interpretations skeptically and carefully.

Errors of Fact

The need for care and skepticism is confirmed by the numerous errors of fact that occur in Owens’s general history of esotericism in the West.

- Owens maintains that Christian Kabbalah began “first with the Florentine court of Lorenzo de Medici at the end of the fifteenth century” (p. 120). However, according to Scholem, “historically, Christian Kabbalah sprang from two sources. The first was the christological speculations of a number of Jewish converts who are known to us from the end of the 13th century until the period of the Spanish expulsion [of the Jews].” The second and most important source was Pico della Miranda’s circle in the late fifteenth-century Platonic Academy of the Medicis at Florence, mentioned by Owens. Owens’s claim that “Jewish Kabbalists ... assisted [Pico della Mirandola] in translating a considerable portion of Kabbalistic literature into Latin” (p. 130) is misleading. In fact Pico took no part in the translation, which was largely the

---

22 It is also clear from his work that Owens does not read Latin, Aramaic, or Hebrew, *sine qua non* for the study of Kabbalah and the Western esoteric traditions. As will be noted below, this is most significant when Owens is forced to rely on an early twentieth-century English translation of the *Zohar* in attempting to understand what Alexander Neibaur and Joseph Smith could have allegedly learned from the original Aramaic.
work of "the very learned [Jewish] convert [to Christianity] Samuel ben Nissim Abulfaraj ... also known as Flavius Mithradates." 24

- Owens asserts—with no evidence—that "the Tabula smaragdina [Emerald Tablet] probably dates to the first or second century C.E." (p. 132 n. 31). In reality, "the Kitab Sirr al-Khaliqa wa San'at al-Tabi'ā (Book of the Secret of Creation and the Art of Nature) ... contains the first occurrence of the tabula smaragdina (Ar. lawh al-zumurrud)." This text is part of a group of esoteric and alchemical works associated with Jabir ibn Hayyan (Latin: Geber) dating to the ninth—not the first—century. 25

- Owens makes an unsupported claim that the alchemists' "'philosopher's stone' [was] the antecedent of Joseph Smith's 'seer's stone'" (p. 136). In fact, the philosopher's stone (lapis philosophorum) was thought to have been composed of primordial matter, the quintessentia—the fifth element after air, water, fire, and earth. Unlike Joseph's seer stone, it was not really a literal "stone" at all, but primordial matter (materia prima)—"this stone therefore is no stone," as notes a famous alchemical text. 26 Sometimes described as a powder the color of sulfur, the philosopher's stone was used for the transmutation of matter and had little or nothing to do with divination. Indeed, the use of stones and mirrors for divination antedates the origin of the idea of the

---

24 Scholém, *Kabbalah*, 197. The translation by Flavius Mithradates totaled some 5500 manuscript pages, of which about 3000 survive in archives; Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter*, 10. These materials were never published.


philosopher's stone. There is no relationship beyond the fact that both happen to be called a stone.27

- Owens's description of the "blossoming [of Kabbalah] in twelfth-century Spain" is misleading. Kabbalah originated in late twelfth-century Provence in southern France; Kabbalah in Spain "blossomed" in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.28

- Owens maintains that the "symbols [of the sun, moon, and stars] combined on the façade of the Nauvoo Temple to embody in sacred architecture a vision of Divinity unique to Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, and alchemy" (p. 137, emphasis added). Furthermore, after discussing symbolism of the sun, moon, angels, trumpets, sacred wedding, beehives, and the all-seeing eye, Owens asserts—without even the semblance of a footnote—that "these are the propagating sources of the symbols finally carved in stone upon Joseph's Nauvoo Temple. To this Hermetic-alchemical tradition and its unique vision alone did [these symbols] pertain, from it alone came an assertion of their sacred import. Early Mormonism's affinity for and incorporation of the same symbolic motifs strongly evidences its intrinsic link with the Hermetic tradition" (p. 145, emphasis added). Unique? Alone? Intrinsic?


Really? Owens seems to be claiming that no other religions ever used the sun, moon, stars, trumpets, and angels as sacred symbols. Can none of these things be found, for example, in the Bible? And was there really an all-seeing eye or a beehive on the Nauvoo Temple? If so they seem to have escaped the attention of all art historians.  

- Owens’s unsubstantiated claim that “Albertus Magnus (1193–1280) became an adept of alchemy and authored numerous alchemical works” (p. 135) is misleading. Albertus’s third book of his Mineralium does discuss alchemy—as any medieval book on natural science would. But nearly all other alchemical works ascribed to Albertus are pseudepigraphic. Contra Owens (p. 152), the alchemical Philosophia naturalis was not written by Albertus, but is a pseudepigraphon.  

- Thus Owens’s claim that Albertus Magnus provides “one of the earliest allegorical representations of the symbols . . . [of the] compass and the square” (p. 152, fig. 10) is simply wrong.
• Owens claims that the concept that "God was once as man now is... could, by various exegetical approaches, be found in the Hermetic-Kabbalistic tradition" (pp. 178-79). It is understandable that he provides neither primary nor secondary evidence for this assertion, since no hermetic or kabbalistic texts make such a claim. Unlike Latter-day Saint concepts of God and divinization, the metaphysical presuppositions of both hermeticism and kabbalism are fundamentally Neoplatonic.32 "Kabbalistic psychology... developed among the Spanish Kabbalists and in the Zohar in the wake of Neoplatonic psychology."33 "One can distinguish at least four main streams that converged to give shape to medieval kabbalah... images and motifs culled from the aggadic-midrashic literature, Merkavah mysticism, theosophic-mythic speculation preserved in texts like Sefer ha-Bahir, and Neoplatonism."34


Examples could be further multiplied. As a cautionary example of the dangers of assuming that parallel equals causality, one can usefully study the funerary silk banner of Fan Yen Shih from Astana in eighth-century China, which includes an example of the symbolic use of both the compass and the square in a cosmic setting; for an illustration, see Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time (Boston: Gambit, 1969), 273. Are we to assume a causal relationship between this Chinese example and those of Freemasonry? I would like to thank Michael Lyon for drawing my attention to these examples. Todd Compton has provided evidence of pre-Masonic use of other Masonic symbols; see "The Handelasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition," in By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:611-42, and "The Whole Token: Mystery Symbolism in Classical Recognition Drama," Epoke 13 (1985): 1-81.


34 Elliot R. Wolfson, Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 273; Wolfson’s index entry for Neoplatonism includes numerous similar passages. It should also be noted that kabbalistic and hermetic metaphysics were
For the hermeticists and other mystics in the broader Neoplatonic tradition, God is the ineffable font of the emanation of all reality. Human "deification" is possible because humans are ultimately simply emanations of God. Deification means to abandon the physical body and for the mind to ascend and again become part of God's Mind, both God and the divine part of humans are incorporeal. Thus the soul "cannot be deified while in a human body," but must pass through a series of reincarnations into higher and higher forms of being before reaching divinity. Divinization is possible because human "mind... comes from the very essence of god... In humans this mind is god." All this is radically different from Joseph Smith's understanding of the nature of God and human deification. From the perspective of the mystical movements of the Neoplatonic tradition, human deification can be called *henosis* (being made one with God) = Latin *unio mystica*, mystical union [with God], Hebrew *sod ha-yihud*, the mystery of unification [with God]), as distinct from *theosis* or *theopoiesis*: being made a god. Wolfson further clarifies this important distinction:

There is another model of mystical experience [besides the *unio mystica* and *henosis* typical of Neoplatonism and Kabbalah] that is germane to [early] Jewish and later Christian apocalyptic as well as to the Hekhalot sources, a model that from its own vantage

---


36 *CH* 1:24–26 = Copenhagen, *Hermetica*, 5–6, notes, discussion, and references 119, 121.


39 *CH* 12:1 = Copenhagen, *Hermetica*, 43.
point involves the narrowing of the gap between human and divine. The model to which I refer, rooted in ancient Near Eastern and Mesopotamian mythology rather than Neoplatonic ontology and epistemology, is that of the ascension to heaven and transformation into an angelic being who occupies a throne alongside the throne of glory [of God].

Latter-day Saint concepts of divinization bear more parallels to the more archaic and non-Neoplatonic theosis models, while kabbalistic and hermetic theories of divinization derive from Neoplatonic henosis models. But however hermeticists may have conceived of deification, none would ever have made the claim that "God was once as man now is" (pp. 178–79), as Owens asserts. The God of the Neoplatonic traditions was the eternal, ineffable, unchanging One, and was certainly never incarnate.

Fundamental errors of this type suggest that readers should use caution in taking Owens as their guide through the arcana of the Western esoteric traditions.

**Assertions and Lack of Evidence**

Such errors of fact are compounded by another striking feature of Owens's article—his numerous unsubstantiated assertions. He readily admits that some of his "hypotheses [are] tied to a thin heritage of fact: it is a type of connection that appears likely but

---


41 For the hermetic understanding of deification see Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 95–115. There is an interesting statement in the Hermetica: "the human on earth is a mortal god but that god in heaven is an immortal human" (CH 10:25 = Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 36; cf. CH 12:1 = Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 43). This is not to say that God was ever an incarnate human, but that human souls are fragments or emanations of the One.
which cannot be documented with certainty” (p. 160). Phrases like “a few tentative evidences suggesting” (p. 164), “such contacts remain beyond easy documentation” (p. 173), and “although there is no evidence” (p. 184) abound throughout his work—but not with anything near the frequency with which we should find them.

The speculative and hypothetical nature of Owens’s thesis is demonstrated by his extensive use of the word perhaps and its many synonyms, and his frequent use of rhetorical questions in his attempts to link Joseph with the esoteric tradition. Such tentative language is only occasionally found in the first part of his article, which is mainly concerned with a summary of the history of the esoteric traditions.42 Once Owens begins to discuss Latter-day Saint history (pp. 154–91), however, the probablys become ubiquitous. Every page of text has at least one example of such language—one page has a phenomenal nine!43 His frequent failure to provide evidence for his propositions leads to repeated unsupported assertions that are far too common to enumerate fully. A few examples must suffice.

- Owens’s standard of evaluating evidence is frequently intolerably weak and broad. For example, he claims that a “depiction of the [tree of the] Sefiroth [from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Latin books] alone could have conveyed a wealth of ideas about an emanational structure in the divine life... which were like those developed in Mormon theology” (p. 165, emphasis added). I challenge anyone unfamiliar with Kabbalah to look at the sefirotic tree from the Portae Lucis (p. 124, fig. 1) and from that alone explain the Neoplatonic emanationist theosophy of the kabbalists. More importantly, how could anyone possibly derive

---

42 For example, see pages 119–20, 129 n. 21, 131, 134, 150.
43 Examples of such language include: most likely, may have, probably, could have, might have, possibility, possible, probable, suggests, and apparently. The nine examples on page 184 are: might, although there is no evidence, probably (twice), may have, suggests, perhaps (three times), and probably. In this, as in many other things, Owens suffers from following Quinn’s and Brooke’s overly speculative methodology; on Quinn, see Robinson, review of Early Mormonism, by D. Michael Quinn, BYU Studies 27/4 (1987): 88–95.
Mormon metaphysics—that, contra Owens, are not emanationist—from this illustration alone?

- Although far less problematically or extensively than Brooke, Owens also ignores obvious biblical antecedents to Latter-day Saint thought in favor of alleged hermetic or alchemical antecedents. Owens informs us that “Paracelsus also prophesied of the coming of the prophet ‘Elias’ as part of a universal restoration, another idea possibly affecting the work of Joseph Smith” (p. 163 n. 90). Quite true. But why does Owens fail to mention the strong biblical tradition of the return of Elijah/Elias, the clear source for this idea for both Paracelsus and Joseph Smith?

- “By the dawn of the nineteenth century,” Owens assures us, “the Hermetic tradition had developed sub rosa several elements characteristic of an incipient heterodox religion” (p. 157). The only evidence given to support this statement is comments of Meric Casaubon (1599–1671) and a secondary statement about Robert Fludd (1574–1637), both of whom lived in the seventeenth, not the nineteenth, century. Was there an incipient heterodox hermetic religion in the United States in the early nineteenth century? If so, it is Owens’s responsibility to provide evidence of its existence from nineteenth-century North America, not two hundred years and a continent away. I will argue below that precisely the opposite was the case.

The Decline of the Western Esoteric Tradition

Owens insists that “any backwoods rodsman divining for buried treasures in New York in 1820 may have known about the [esoteric] tradition” and that “there undoubtedly existed

---

44 Owens’s argument in this section rests on the hidden and unsubstantiated assumption that Joseph somehow had access to, and was influenced by, rare sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Latin esoteric texts. If Joseph did not have access to such texts, how was he supposed to have seen and been influenced by a picture of the Tree of the Sefirot?

45 The loci classici on the return of Elijah are Malachi 4:5–6 and Matthew 16:14; 17:3, 12. Note that Elias is the Greco-Latin form of Elijah; see Hamblyn, Peterson, and Milton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 39–43, on Brooke’s more egregious failure to examine the biblical antecedents of Mormon thought. One is reminded of the Doctour of Phisik in Chaucer—“his studie was but litel on the Bible” (Canterbury Tales, 1:438).
individuals [in the early nineteenth-century United States] who were deeply cognizant of Hermeticism, its lore, rituals, and aspirations. And this group probably included an occasional associate of treasure diggers” (p. 159). Elsewhere Owens asserts that “there must have been more than a few” people in frontier New York who had been influenced by the hermetic, kabbalistic, and alchemical traditions (p. 165, emphasis added to all these citations). Evidence, please! Who exactly were these individuals? What exactly did they know? How exactly did they gain their unusual knowledge? Exactly when and where did they live? With whom exactly did they associate? What exactly did they teach their associates? What evidence—any evidence at all—does Owens provide for any of his speculations?

In fact, two recent surveys of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hermeticism by Joscelyn Godwin and Antoine Faiivre mention no hermeticists in North America before the beginnings of the Spiritualist movements in 1848.46 Furthermore, from Godwin we find that the profile of the typical eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European hermeticist was that of a wealthy, highly educated, Latin-reading dilettante who was disaffected from Christianity and idled away his time in small cliques of like-minded hedonists—hardly the circles in which the poverty-stricken, ill-educated, and deeply Christian Joseph Smith moved. If there were as many hermeticists in the early nineteenth-century United States as Owens claims, why do the histories of Godwin and Faiivre fail to mention them? More importantly, why does Owens himself fail to name even one prominent North American hermeticist who was active in the first half of the nineteenth century?47


47 In a private conversation with Joscelyn Godwin (Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic, September 1995), I asked if there were any hermeticists practicing in North America before the occult revival after 1848. He replied that there were few, if any, because there were almost no hermetic books in the United States; they were too rare and expensive and were limited to libraries or wealthy collectors in Europe. If Owens wishes to argue that such esoteric texts were accessible on the frontier of the United States it is his responsibility to provide
The significance and influence of the esoteric traditions had dramatically declined by the mid-eighteenth century in the wake of the Enlightenment—an intellectual movement about which Owens is strangely silent. Indeed, one could argue that Joseph Smith lived in precisely the time (the early nineteenth century) and place (the frontier regions of the New World) in which knowledge of the Western esoteric traditions had less significance and impact than at any other time or place in Western civilization since the invention of printing. In other words, I am arguing that before the Enlightenment and after the occult revival of the late nineteenth century, esoteric lore was more accessible than during the period between the Enlightenment and the beginnings of the occult revival. Furthermore, the frontier regions of the New World (as opposed to Europe) were the least likely to have books or materials on esoteric subjects.48

As is well known, hermeticism entered a period of serious decline following Isaac Casaubon’s demonstration in 1614 that the hermetic texts dated to after Christianity, not before Plato.49 Thereafter, although a few scholars ignored the implications of Casaubon’s study, “by the eighteenth century, Casaubon’s debunking of hermetic antiquity had entered canonical accounts of intellectual history.”50 Thus “after 1630, no new or reprinted Greek editions [of the Hermetica] appeared until Parthey’s Poemander of 1854,” after which an interest in the Hermetica revived, “much of it provoked by the theosophical movements of the late nineteenth century.”51 Thus Joseph Smith lived in the period of the least influence of the Hermetica on Western intellectual and religious thought since the Renaissance.

The pattern with Kabbalah is precisely the same. In the wake of the messianic and mystical excesses of the Sabbatean

---

48 Herbert Leventhal provides a study of the relative decline of the esoteric world view in English colonies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; see In the Shadow of the Enlightenment (New York: New York University Press, 1976), esp. 10, 262–71; see also the quotation on p. 277 below.

49 Yates, Giordano Bruno, 348–403, 422–47; Copenhaver, Hermetica, 1, nn. 63–64, provides more recent bibliography.

50 Copenhaver, Hermetica, 1.

51 Ibid., li, with full bibliography in nn. 65–66.
movement, Rabbi Jacob Emden (1697–1776) and others subjected the Zohar to the strictest intellectual and theological scrutiny.\(^{52}\) Although originally a believing kabbalist, Emden, in his study \textit{Mitpahat Sefarim}\(^{53}\) effectively “divested Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai [second century A.D.] and his disciples completely of the authorship of the Zohar.” Instead it was shown to be the work of “Rabbi Moses de Leon [died 1305], or contemporaries of his.”\(^{54}\) The effect among Jews was similar to that of Casaubon’s redating the Hermetica—it seriously undermined the antiquity, authority, and importance of the text. Thereafter, “Scholars of the Enlightenment (Haskalah) period [c. 1770s–1880s], apart from one or two, . . . regarded the kabbalah as a black stain on the fabric of pure Judaism. . . . Their fierce opposition to kabbalah [was] full of contempt and disdain.”\(^{55}\) Neibaur, Owens’s supposed candidate for the role of Joseph Smith’s kabbalistic mentor, lived squarely in the middle of this Jewish Enlightenment.

Owens speculates at great length about possible Rosicrucian influences on Joseph Smith (pp. 138–54), asserting (with absolutely no evidence) that Luman Walter was influenced by Rosicrucian ideas (p. 162). Once again, however, Owens ignores the annoying fact that the Rosicrucian movement was effectively dead at the time of Joseph Smith. In England “the Gold and Rosy Cross appears to have had no English members and was virtually extinct by 1793.”\(^{56}\) There was no “independent, formalized Rosicrucian order functioning in England in the 1830s.”\(^{57}\) The situation was the same in the United States. McIntosh is skeptical.
about alleged Rosicrucian influences on Pennsylvania German mystical communities (such as that in Ephrata), but even if they existed, these influences were very mild and the movements had all but disappeared by the early nineteenth century.58 "The first man, however, to promote Rosicrucianism widely in America was Paschal Beverly Randolph" who "began his occult activities about 1858,"59 a bit late to have influenced Joseph Smith. Even this was largely pseudo-Rosicrucianism, having only a vague similarity to its alleged seventeenth-century antecedents. As Randolph himself admitted, "very nearly all that I have given as Rosicrucianism originated in my soul; and scarce a single thought, only suggestions, have I borrowed from those who in ages past, called themselves by that name."60

Thus Joseph Smith was alive precisely during the period of the least influence of Kabbalah, hermeticism, and Rosicrucianism, all of which had seriously declined by the late eighteenth century—before Joseph’s birth—and would revive only in the late nineteenth century, after Joseph’s death. Owens never recognizes these developments, but instead consistently quotes sources earlier and later than Joseph Smith as indicative of the ideas supposedly found in Joseph’s day.

The Fallacy of Semantic Equivocation

Owens’s entire thesis also suffers repeatedly from semantic equivocation—using a term “in two or more senses within a single argument, so that a conclusion appears to follow when in fact it does not.”61 Owens does not adequately recognize the fact that the semantic domain of words can vary radically from individual to individual, through translation, by shifts in meaning through

58 McIntosh, The Rosicrucians, 129. Edighoffer, “Rosicrucianism,” 203–9, briefly charts the fate of various Rosicrucian movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth century; it becomes obvious that they disappeared in the late eighteenth century and reappeared only in the late nineteenth.
59 McIntosh, The Rosicrucians, 129–30; cf. Godwin, Theosophical Enlightenment, 247–61. Claims of alleged Rosicrucian influence—such as those made by Owens—need to be viewed with a good deal of skepticism.
60 Cited by Godwin, Theosophical Enlightenment, 259.
time, or because of idiosyncratic use by different contemporary communities. For Owens it is often sufficient to assert that he feels that kabbalistic or hermetic ideas “resonate” with his understanding of Latter-day Saint thought (p. 132). Thus, in an attempt to demonstrate affiliations between the Latter-day Saint world view and that of esotericists, Owens presents a number of ideas that he claims represent parallels between his understanding of the kabbalistic and hermetic traditions and his view of Latter-day Saint theology, but that, upon closer inspection, turn out to be only vaguely similar, if at all.

Rigorous thought is possible only when definitions of words are explicit, precise, narrow, and unambiguous. Owens’s methodology repeatedly uses language imprecisely, amorphously, broadly, and ambiguously. Although he is better informed on this matter than Brooke—who makes not the slightest effort to define his technical terms—Owens still seems largely unaware of the raging debate in academic circles concerning the definition of magic and the immense technical literature on the subject. Instead, he informs us that “one is ill-advised to argue here with Quinn’s general approach or definition of magic and its world view,” including the claim that “its intent is often coercive” (p. 156). In reality there is absolutely no scholarly consensus on the meaning of magic. Like Brooke, Owens also makes no effort to define hermeticism, despite the fact that serious questions have been raised about its nature and scope. The term hermeticism

is given more clarity and autonomy [by some modern scholars] than the [historical] currents it describes, and

---

62 I am reminded of a conversation I had in September 1995 with a New Age esotericist in Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic. She was astonished when I mentioned the messiology of kabbalism, asking me what the Messiah had to do with kabbalism. As we discussed the matter further, I came to realize that, for her, kabbalism was simply a New Age meditative technique in which the sefirot were used as symbols for focusing the mind, while for me Kabbalah was a complex, centuries-old historical phenomenon encompassing a wide range of texts, ideas, and practices in both Judaism and Christianity.


hence an explanatory function far beyond what it can
deliver. "Hermeticism" is a notoriously slippery con-
cept. . . "It still remains to show that Hermeticism
ever functioned as an important, independent world
view."65

Scholarship based on such nondefinitions is an utterly fruitless
endeavor.

Owens frequently implicitly redefines kabbalistic and hermetic
terms in a way that would have been foreign to both the original
esoteric believers and to early Latter-day Saints. In an effort to
make ideas seem similar, he is forced to severely distort both what
esotericists and Latter-day Saints believe. I have neither the time
nor the inclination to examine carefully Owens’s instances of
semantic equivocation in their entirety. I will focus on a major
example—Owens’s use of the words _prophet_ and _revelation._66

As with most of his technical terms, Owens never provides us
with an unambiguous definition of _prophet_ or _revelation_; we are
forced to search for implicit meanings. Owens often uses the
words in a fundamentally un-Mormon way. When Owens says that
the nature of the revelations of Joseph and those of the kabbalists
is essentially the same, he is speaking from his own modern
Jungian perspective—not that of either the kabbalists or the
Latter-day Saints. For Owens it seems a _prophet_ is one who has a
transcendent psychological experience with God, and _revelations_
are the intuitions about life and the universe one derives from
such experiences.

In many ways Owens’s functional definition of _prophet_ is
closer to that of a mystic. This allows kabbalistic mystical revela-
tions to be seen as similar to Owens’s revisionist understandings of

---

65 Sherman, _John Dee_, 20, citing Charles B. Schmidt, "Reappraisals in
Renaissance Science," review of _Hermeticism and the Scientific

66 Interested readers should carefully examine Owens’s use of the terms
_gnostic_ (pp. 121–22), _vision_ (p. 123), _plurality of gods_ (p. 126), _divine
mother_ (p. 126), _sacred marriage_ (p. 126), _the origins of the human soul_
(p. 132), and _proxy_ (p. 136), among many others. Owens’s discussion of
_prophets_ in the esoteric traditions can be found on pages 120–26.
Joseph Smith’s revelatory experiences: prophet = mystic. Thus it is possible to conclude, since Joseph was a prophet/mystic and kabbalists are mystics/prophets, that the experiences of Joseph and the kabbalists represent different manifestations of the same phenomenon. But kabbalists’ own descriptions of their mystical experiences are fundamentally dissimilar to Joseph’s descriptions of his prophetic experiences.

Now it is true that some kabbalists claimed transcendent mystical experiences, which they sometimes called “prophecy.” Moshe Idel describes one such example.

Abulafia [1240–91] describes this system [of Kabbalah] with two basic terms: prophetic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of Names. The former term (which I have generally translated as ecstatic Kabbalah in the body of this work) refers to the goal of this mystical path: namely, the attainment of “prophecy” or “ecstasy,” i.e., manifestations of revelation and union with the Divine (devequt), designated by the classical term prophecy (nevu‘ah) in the absence of any other more suitable, comprehensive term.

Idel makes an important point: Abulafia (and by extension other kabbalists) believed that their mystical experiences were similar to, if not precisely the same as, the experiences of the biblical prophets, and thus called these experiences “prophecy.” But the ecstatic mystical experiences of the kabbalists, even though sometimes called prophecy, bear little resemblance to the

67 Attempts to understand Joseph Smith as a mystic are not new to Latter-day Saint studies; Hugh Nibley showed the fallacy of viewing Joseph’s experiences as mystical, “Prophets and Mystics,” 98–107. For a basic bibliography of such efforts, see Louis C. Midgley, “The Challenge of Historical Consciousness: Mormon History and the Encounter with Secular Modernity,” in By Study and Also by Faith, 2:532 n. 56. Cf. Midgley’s discussion of Jan Shipps’s evolving understanding of this idea in “The Shipps Odyssey in Retrospect,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 7/2 (1995): 242–46.

68 Idel, Mystical Experience, 8, the best introduction to Abulafia. Note that “Abulafia was considered by the Christian Kabbalist Johannes Reuchlin as a pillar of Christian Kabbalah. . . . Christian Kabbalah is based to a considerable extent upon the thought of Abulafia, whose writings were translated into Latin and Italian” (ibid., 10).
experiences of Joseph Smith. Modern scholars such as Idel recognize a fundamental distinction between the prophetic experiences described by biblical prophets and those of the kabbalists. Recognizing the idiosyncratic use of the word prophecy by the kabbalists, Idel consistently uses the term prophecy in quotations throughout his book when referring to the experiences of Abulafia, preferring the term ecstasy. Owens would have us believe that the substance of the experiences of Joseph and the kabbalists was similar because they used the same word to describe their fundamentally different experiences.

Owens’s approach thus obscures significant differences between the Mormon understanding of revelation and that of the kabbalists. For example, Owens describes Joseph’s revelatory experiences in kabbalistic terms as “numinous and uniquely individual experience[s]” that were “personal and self-contained” (p. 161). This, of course, ignores the fact that many of Joseph’s visions were shared by others—the experience of the Three Witnesses, the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, the revelation of section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, to name just a few.

It is important to distinguish between the nature of the visionary experiences of the earlier biblical and Merkavah “mystics”—that more closely parallel the experiences of Joseph Smith—from those of the later kabbalists. Owens fails to make this necessary and most significant distinction. Kabbalistic visions were generally had by individuals alone (seldom, if ever, with groups simultaneously seeing the same thing), were induced by mystical “techniques,” were transmitted from master to disciple, and

---

69 Idel, *Mystical Experience*, 8, 55, 57, etc.
were fundamentally nonmaterialistic. Many of Joseph's prophetic experiences were materialistic and empirical. He saw divine and angelic beings with real bodies of flesh and bone. He was physically touched by these beings. They gave him real material objects (e.g., the golden plates). As noted above, on occasions these heavenly messengers were seen and heard by several people simultaneously, who all reported seeing the same thing. Kabbalistic visions ("prophecies") were of the "imagination" and "intellect" in the Neoplatonic sense. God, being pure Intellect, was apprehended by pure intellectual faculties. God could not be seen with our physical eyes or touched with our hands. For the kabbalists, when God revealed himself, you would "imagine" the "image" of God in your "imagination." Unlike the modern naturalistic understanding, thus "imagining" God would be superior, not inferior, to a materialistic vision. Thus the goal of the kabbalists was to obtain "the total unity between man's intellect and the supreme Being, whether this is understood as God or as the Active Intellect." This understanding is radically different from that of Mormonism.

Another form of reductionism and semantic equivocation in which Owens indulges is his attempt to define revelation as a fundamentally psychological phenomenon. For Owens, revelation is

24-28), visualizations of the letters of the Divine Names (ibid., 30-33), contemplation of the navel (ibid., 34-35), listening to music (ibid., 53-64), ritual weeping (Idel, Kabbalah, 75-88), and visualization of colors (ibid., 103-11). None of these practices, as mystical techniques, can be found in Mormonism. These techniques could be seen as attempts to compel God to reveal himself. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, maintained that although man may see God, "it shall be in his [God's] own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68).

73 Wolfson, Through a Speculum, deals extensively with these types of distinctions. The imagination was where images could be formed in the mind, while the intellect was the site of pristine intellection without the senses or visual imagery. From this viewpoint, pure intellection of God is superior to imagining God, and both are superior to materialistic understandings such as those held by Joseph Smith.

74 This, of course, is the opposite of the Latter-day Saint view. See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 and the useful study by David L. Paulsen, "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives," BYU Studies 35/4 (1995-96): 6-94.

75 Idel, Abulafia, 13.
Jungian "archetypal manifestations consistent with a recurrent type of 'revelatory' experience" (p. 161).\footnote{As in this passage, Owens has the annoying habit of frequently putting the term revelation in quotations—that seems to imply that the "revelations" are only so-called. Owens describes himself as a "Jungian" in "America's Hermetic Prophet," 64. His paper manifests many of the well-known weaknesses of Jungian methodology when applied to historical questions.} Owens provides an explanation for historical causality that ignores the possibility of real revelation: "Whether this [Joseph's translation] was a reflection of Joseph's contact with Kabbalah or just of Joseph remains an open question" (p. 166), he informs us. That it could have been true revelation seems a closed question. Owens does not explicitly deny the existence of revelation, he merely redefines what revelation means: "Men can have experiences," he assures us, "call them intuitions or visions—that carry revelatory power and the savor of divine origin" (p. 123 n. 12). The admission that such visions could be "empirical psychological realities" (p. 126) should not be seen as a ringing endorsement of the Prophet Joseph, since "empirical psychological realities" include events that have no ontological basis outside human brain chemistry.

Owens's terminological muddle on this point is further confused by his reading of Harold Bloom (pp. 118–19). For Owens, "Bloom's intuition [links] the prophet's [Joseph Smith's] visionary bent with the occult aspirations of Jewish Kabbalah" (p. 118).\footnote{For reviews of Bloom from a Latter-day Saint perspective, see M. Gerald Bradford, ed., "Four LDS Views on Harold Bloom," BYU Studies 35/1 (1995): 173–204.} As I understand Bloom, he reductionistically equates prophecy with poetry, artistic genius, and a good imagination. By thus expanding and conflating the definitions of both poetry and prophecy, Bloom maintains that good poets are frequently prophets,\footnote{See, for example, Harold Bloom's understanding of Dante as a "prophet," in The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 81, 88, 93, 97, 101.} prophets are simply literary geniuses, and religion is "spilled poetry."\footnote{Harold Bloom, The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 80.} While Bloom the agnostic speaks metaphorically—since there are no real prophets, their revelations are necessarily a form of literature—Owens wishes to historicize Bloom's
literary “intuition” (p. 118), maintaining that “careful reevaluation of historical data suggests there is both a poetic and an unsuspected factual substance to Bloom’s thesis” (p. 118). For Owens, Joseph didn’t merely have a creative poetic imagination like the kabbalists—as claimed by Bloom—he was historically influenced by them!

A final significant problem related to semantic equivocation is the blurring of the distinctions between kabbalism and hermeticism, as if they were a single system of thought. Some branches of the Western esoteric traditions were indeed conflated by Renaissance magi based on their theory of prisca theologia—the primordial revelation of God to pagan philosophers. But even if we were to concede that Joseph indeed read Jewish kabbalistic texts, as Owens alleges, this would not provide evidence for knowledge of the Hermetica. Although some Christian kabbalists did indeed merge hermeticism with Kabbalah in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, traditional Jewish kabbalists were not greatly influenced by Christian hermeticism. Thus Joseph could not have been influenced by any “hermetic” ideas from reading Jewish kabbalistic texts. Contra Owens, Herbert Leventhal noted,

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw the gradual disintegration of the “Elizabethan world picture” [which included the hermetic and esoteric world view as major components] in the American colonies. It no longer existed as a gestalt, as a unified set of interlocking and mutually supporting ideas. A person who believed in one aspect of it did not necessarily, or even probably, believe in the rest.

Sophisticated researchers must carefully distinguish the individual paths of historical development of different branches of the Western esoteric tradition. Attention must always focus on primary texts in their original historical contexts. Instead, Owens syncretistically synthesizes the mythology of modern esotericists, modern academic theories, Renaissance prisca theologia, medieval

81 Leventhal, In the Shadow of the Enlightenment, 262.
kabbalism, and ancient hermeticism with reckless abandon. As will be demonstrated below, he seldom pays adequate attention to the historical and linguistic contexts of primary texts. Indeed, he seldom deals with primary texts at all. The validity and significance of his proposed parallels are seriously undermined by his failure to define his terms properly and to contextualize ideas. Only those fundamentally unfamiliar with the early modern esoteric tradition will find Owens's assertions plausible.

**Problems of Causality**

Granting, for the sake of argument, that Owens can establish legitimate parallels between Latter-day Saint and esoteric ideas, we must now turn to the question of the nature of the relationship and the potential causes of such alleged parallels. Like Brooke, Owens suffers from unrestrained parallelomania, making little effort to distinguish between analog and causal antecedent. Owens's methodology in dealing with parallels suffers from precisely the same flaws previously noted in Brooke.

Throughout his entire book, Brooke is plagued with the problem of analogue versus causal antecedent, which he himself recognizes on occasion. The problem of causality has been well summarized by Jonathan Z. Smith: “Homology [causal antecedent] is a similarity of form or structure between two species shared from their common ancestor; an analogy is a similarity of form or structure between two species not sharing a common ancestor.” Brooke would have done well to follow Jonathan Smith’s excellent analysis of the problem.

It is agreed that the statement “x resembles y” is logically incomplete . . . [because it] suppress[es] the multi-term statement of analogy and difference capable of being properly expressed in formulations such as: “x resembles y more than z with respect to . . . ;” or, “x resembles y more than w resembles z with respect to . . . .” That is to say, the statement of comparison is never dyadic, but always triadic; there is always
an implicit “more than,” and there is always a
“with respect to.”

Brooke’s [and Owens’s] great methodological fail-
ure is that he does not clearly identify the “more
than” or “with respect to” in his alleged parallels
between Mormonism and hermeticism.82

For Owens and Brooke the assertion of any alleged parallel
between hermetic and Mormon ideas—most of which are either
very weak, based on misunderstandings, or derived from biblical
antecedents—is sufficient to allow us to assume causality. Indeed,
causality between the alleged parallels is almost always assumed; it
is almost never argued or demonstrated.

Again, like Brooke, Owens’s entire thesis is an extended exer-
cise in the fallacy of the perfect analogy; he is constantly asserting
that if one parallel can be demonstrated between Mormonism and
hermeticism, then the entire systems must somehow be interre-
lated.83 Again, referring to a parallel discussion on Brooke,

Brooke is a rhetorical master at the fallacy of per-
fect analogy, which “consists in reasoning from a par-
tial resemblance between two entities to an entire and
exact correspondence. It is an erroneous inference
from the fact that A and B are similar in some respects
to the false conclusion that they are the same in all re-
spects.” Readers should be on the lookout for frequent
use of an extended version of this fallacy. Brooke re-
peatedly argues as follows: Item 1 has characteristics A
and B; item 2 has characteristics B and C; item 3 has
characteristics C and D; therefore, since 1 and 2 share
one characteristic (B), and 2 and 3 share one charac-
teristic (C), 1 and 3 must share some characteristics. But

82 Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 44–
45; cf. Jonathan Z. Smith, Drudgery Divine (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1990), 47 n. 15, 51. Scholars positing parallels between Mormonism and
either Joseph’s nineteenth-century environment or antiquity should carefully
study this essay.

83 Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 45;
cf. Fischer, Historians’ Fallacies, 247.
the A and B of 1 have nothing whatsoever to do with
the C and D of 3.84

Again paralleling Brooke, Owens fails to acknowledge, let
alone explain, the existence of the far more numerous differences
between Mormonism and the Western esoteric traditions.85 Owens
also ignores the far more detailed, precise, and extensive resemblances between Latter-day Saint esoteric ideas and the esoteric
doctrines, texts, and rituals of the ancient world, which offer much
more complete parallels than does late medieval and early modern
esotericism.86 Why is it that the elements in kabbalistic thought
that most closely parallel Joseph’s ideas are those that also occur
in more archaic thought, while the unique medieval accretions—
like gematria, sefirot, emanations, etc.—are never explicitly men-
tioned by Joseph Smith?87 Owens neither recognizes this phe-

omenon nor attempts to explain it.

Owens’s brief discussion of causality is weak and incomplete.
He sees four possible explanations for his alleged parallels:

1. Joseph “had significant interactions with the Hermetic-
Kabbalistic mythos,” but this possibly had no “impact on his
religious-making vision” (p. 160).

2. The alleged parallels maybe “synchronous rather than
causal” (p. 160), which essentially means they are “pure happen-
stance” (p. 161).

3. The parallels represent Jungian “archetypal manifestations
consistent with a recurrent type of ‘revelatory’ experience”
(p. 161).

84 Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 45.
85 Ibid., 55–58.
86 For Brooke’s problems in this regard, see Hamblin, Peterson, and
Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 55–57. This is not necessarily to argue
that the ancient parallels are complete and absolute, nor is it to argue a causal
connection. Rather, it is simply to point out that the argument of a causal rela-
tionship between Mormonism and Western esotericism cannot be understood
until the nature and cause of the parallels between Mormonism and ancient
esotericism are elucidated.

87 On the ideas of gematria, see Scholem, Kabbalah, 337–43. On sefirot,
see Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, 1:269–370; Scholem, Kabbalah, 96–116;
Scholem, Major Trends, 205–25; and below, p. 300 n. 140. On emanationism,
see Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, 1:273–83; and above, pp. 263–64.
4. Joseph’s ideas derive from “independent, personal cognition or ‘revelation’” (p. 161).88

In all this Owens ignores two other obvious explanations: that both esoteric and Latter-day Saint ideas derive from a similar source, e.g., the Bible, or that Joseph Smith received true revelation, as opposed to some ill-defined type of Jungian “personal cognition.”

Alleged Examples of Joseph Smith and Hermeticism

Turning at last directly to Joseph Smith, Owens maintains that Joseph was intimately connected with folk magic during his early life (pp. 161–62). He provides three examples of Joseph’s alleged relationship with folk magic: magical artifacts held as heirlooms by Hyrum Smith’s descendants (pp. 161–62); Luman Walter(s) as Joseph’s supposed occult mentor (pp. 162–63); and Joseph’s relation with Freemasonry as a possible conduit of esoteric knowledge (pp. 166–73). On the first two points Owens is entirely derivative from Michael Quinn. On none of these points does he provide any substantial new evidence. Each will be analyzed below.

Magical Artifacts. Relying entirely on Quinn’s flawed work, Owens insists that Joseph Smith or members of his immediate family owned a magical talisman, a ceremonial dagger, and parchments early in their lives.89 Based on Quinn’s claims, Owens maintains the following seven propositions:

1. Joseph himself owned these items (p. 161).
2. His possession dates to his early days of “treasure seeking” (p. 162).
3. He used them for magical purposes (p. 162).
4. He made them himself or commissioned them (p. 161).
5. He therefore must have used magic books to make them (p. 162).

88 Owens's syntax is unfortunately ambiguous here. It is unclear whether he intends personal cognition to be in grammatical apposition to revelation or something distinct from it. Note again the use of quotation marks around the word revelation.

89 Based on Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View, 57, 65–72, 96–111. See n. 7 in this paper for references to reviews of Quinn’s work.
6. He therefore must have had an occult mentor to help him with the difficult process of understanding the magical books and making these items (p. 162).

7. This occult mentor transmitted extensive arcane hermetic lore to Joseph beyond the knowledge necessary to make the artifacts (p. 163).

In reality, Owens’s seven propositions are simply a tissue of assumptions, assertions, and speculations. There is no contemporary primary evidence that Joseph himself owned or used the parchments or dagger; one late source claims he had a talisman in his pocket at the time of his death.90 We do not know why Joseph had the talisman, or even if he really did. And we do not know—if he had it—what he thought of it. We do not know when, how, or why these items became heirlooms of the Hyrum Smith family. Again, there is no contemporary primary evidence that mentions Joseph or anyone in his family using these artifacts—as Quinn himself noted, “possession alone may not be proof of use.”91 There is no evidence that Joseph ever had any magic books. There is no evidence that Joseph ever had an occult mentor who helped him make or use these items.

The methodology used by Owens is a classic example of what one could call the miracle of the addition of the probabilities. The case of Quinn and Owens relies on a rickety tower of unproven propositions that do not provide certainty, rather a geometrically increasing improbability. Probabilities are multiplied, not added. Combining two propositions, each of which has a 50% probability, does not create a 100% probability, it creates a 25% probability that both are true together. Allowing each of Owens’s seven propositions a 50% probability—a very generous allowance—creates a .0078% probability that the combination of all his seven

90 It is, of course, possible that the Bidamon talisman (and perhaps other Bidamon artifacts) did not in fact belong to Joseph Smith. Charles Bidamon may have been a modern counterpart of the medieval relic mongers, who—for the right price—could dredge up a lock of hair or bit of bone of any required early saint. The question of the authenticity of some of the Bidamon artifacts is worth further study.

91 Quinn, Early Mormonism, 57.
propositions is true. Assigning each proposition a probability of 20% yields an overall probability of .0000128%; 10% probability = .0000001%. Owens’s overall argument exhibits several examples of attempted addition of probabilities.

Based on the evidence of these artifacts alone, it is just as plausible to speculate that these items were obtained from Masonic friends or European converts late in the Nauvoo period; that they were owned by Joseph’s friends or family rather than by Joseph himself; that they were essentially heirlooms, good-luck charms, or ornaments for Masonic pageantry; or that neither Joseph nor anyone associated with him had any idea what they were “really” made for. If there were some solid contemporary primary evidence from Joseph or other early Mormons of magical activity—like Mark Hofmann’s forged “Salamander Letter”—then these artifacts might provide useful circumstantial confirmation. But there is no such solid corroborating contemporary primary evidence!

Owens makes an important point on this matter. Contra Quinn, Owens observes that:

the treasure digger’s “magic world view” . . . must be distinguished from the more complex Hermetic vision.

92 Assigning each proposition a probability of 20% yields an overall probability of .0000128%; 10% probability = .0000001%. Owens’s overall argument exhibits several examples of attempted addition of probabilities.

93 For example, it is possible that the artifacts described by Quinn (Early Mormonism, 65–72, 96–111) were not used by the Smith family but were confiscated by them from other saints who are known to have been condemned for practicing magic (see Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, “Mormon in the Fiery Furnace,” 18, for several examples). Brooke, Refiner’s Fire, 239, discusses the confiscation and destruction, by George A. Smith, of magical items in the possession of early English converts. Such items could have been put in a trunk, forgotten, and rediscovered decades later by another generation who had no idea where they had originally come from or what they had been used for. I am not, of course, arguing that such was actually the case, only that it is just as plausible as the speculations of Quinn, Brooke, and Owens.

What a young Joseph Smith could have learned from a rodsman, ensconced only in a [folk] magic world view, is less important to his religious development than the kinds of ideas a Hermetic initiate might have stimulated. (pp. 159–60)

The real question, of course, is whether Joseph ever encountered such a "Hermetic initiate"—and whether such people even existed on the American frontier. If Owens’s assertion that Joseph would have required a hermetic mentor to use the artifacts is true—and it is nothing but an assertion—it should be seen as evidence not that Joseph had such an occult mentor, but rather that he did not make or use the magical items in question.

*Luman Walter(s) as an Occult Mentor.* In order to provide a "Hermetic initiate" as a source for Joseph’s alleged expertise in hermeticism, Owens resurrects the dubious proposition that Joseph studied magic with Luman Walter (pp. 162–63). In this matter Owens is again completely dependent upon Quinn, but goes beyond even Quinn’s exaggeration of the evidence. The difference between the little that is actually known about Walter and his ever-expanding role as the occult mentor of Joseph Smith is quite striking—rather a case of the distinction between the Walter of history and the Luman of faith.

The Luman of faith is a Renaissance magus with “considerable knowledge of Hermetic traditions” (p. 162), who “stood in a tradition dominated by the medical and esoteric writings of Paracelsus [1493–1541], steeped in alchemy, and associated closely with Rosicrucian philosophy” (p. 162). The Walter of history was an obscure “drunken vagabond,” a frontier snake-oil salesman who used hocus-pocus to con the superstitious. The Luman of faith was a master of Paracelsian medicine. The Walter of history would have studied medicine—assuming he did so at all—in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. But Paracelsian medicine, the supposed conduit of esoteric lore to Walter, had been superseded among physicians by the early eighteenth century.

---

95 Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 82–84.
96 The very limited evidence concerning Luman Walter is summarized by Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 81–84; needless to say, I disagree with Quinn’s interpretation of the significance of the evidence.
century. Even nonprofessionals were aware of the collapse of Paracelsianism, as witnessed by the discussion of the issue in the 1818 novel *Frankenstein*. It is as unlikely that Walter—assuming he had any medical training at all—would have studied Paracelsus as it is that a modern medical school would be teaching phrenology. The Luman of faith was an intimate acquaintance of Joseph who revealed to Joseph arcane magical secrets; not only does proximity equal contact—since they could have met, they must have met—but unsubstantiated contact proves undemonstrated influence. The Walter of history lived in Sodus, New


99 Owens’s assertions that Neibaur and his father also could have been influenced by Paracelsianism and hermeticism because they had studied medicine (pp. 174–75) or that John Bennett was obviously interested in hermeticism because he had studied medicine (p. 170) fail on precisely the same grounds.

100 Owens attempts to turn a highly debatable proposition—that young Joseph ever even knew Luman Walter—into historical certainty: Walter was “known to have been in Joseph’s and his family’s circle of acquaintances prior to 1827” (p. 162).

101 This is a classic manifestation of the fallacy of the possible proof, which “consists in an attempt to demonstrate that a factual statement is true or false by establishing the possibility of its truth or falsity,” Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies*, 53. As an analogous example of this fallacy, I am on the mailing list of a New Age bookstore in Salt Lake City, which I have visited on occasion. Should this contact be seen as evidence that I am a follower of New Age philosophy? I am not. The problem of contact being seen as evidence for influence was vividly illustrated by my misunderstanding of Owens’s relationship with *Gnosis* magazine—a New Age publication. In the Spring 1995 issue of *Gnosis* (in which Owens published his “American Prophet”), Lance S. Owens is listed as a “Contributing Writer.” I assumed that this implied that Owens shared the New Age presuppositions of *Gnosis*. In private correspondence I was informed by
York, almost a two-day journey (25 miles) from Palmyra; only virulent anti-Mormons claim Joseph Smith and Walter ever met. So different are the Luman of faith and the Walter of history that one wonders if this is not a case of Joseph Smith being influenced not by Luman Walter, but by a different man of the same name.

Freemasonry as an Alleged Conduit of the Esoteric Traditions. The relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism is too complex to be dealt with in detail here. Although Owens adds nothing new to former discussions, it is worth recognizing Owens's methodological muddle on the subject. For a correct understanding of the relationship between Joseph Smith and Freemasonry, it is vital first to clearly distinguish between the various types of Freemasonry, especially between the esoteric and nonesoteric forms. Next, we must establish when and where the different types of Freemasonry existed, and what ideas were universal or unique to a particular branch. Finally, it is important to identify which types of Freemasonry were accessible to Joseph Smith, and when.102

With this in mind, Owens's assertion that Joseph had an "almost twenty-year association with Masons" (p. 169) is highly misleading in light of the fact that Joseph himself was a Mason for only the last two years of his life.103 The fact that Hyrum Smith became a Mason in the 1820s tells us nothing about Joseph's knowledge of, or attitudes about, Freemasonry, beyond the bare proposition that he knew it existed and was probably not ill-disposed to the movement.104

Owens that this is not the case. Here we find far more evidence of Owens being closely associated with the New Age movement than we have for Joseph Smith's alleged association with hermeticists. Yet Owens insists that he does not share New Age presuppositions. Might not the same be true of Joseph Smith?

102 Michael W. Homer, "'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism," Dialogue 27/3 (1994): 1-116, is useful and provides helpful bibliography, but frequently fails to follow these methodological imperatives.

103 See, further, the comments in Hamblin, Peterson, and Mitton, "Mormon in the Fiery Furnace," 52-58.

104 Witness the endless confusion and contradiction on the issue of the so-called "Gadianton Masons." Many critics of the Book of Mormon agree that the Gadiantons are just Masons in disguise, but no one can come up with a coherent explanation of why Joseph—if he authored the book—never used the Book of
Owens is completely uncritical in his assertions about the potential of Freemasonry to transmit esoteric knowledge to Joseph. While providing no evidence, he asserts that Albert Pike’s 1871 “views [on the esoteric background of Freemasonry] reflected lore already established in Masonry during the [Nauvoo] period” (p. 168). If this is so he should demonstrate it with evidence from the early 1840s rather than 1871. Following Michael Homer, Owens asserts that “the Scottish Rite developed by [the same Albert] Pike was an evolution of the eighteenth-century French Masonic Rite de Perfection, which in several degrees was influenced by Kabbalah” (p. 168). This is an intriguing claim, since “the actual existence of this Rite [of Perfection] has been placed in doubt.” The evidence for the supposed Rite de Perfection consists of “a ‘traditional’ list [of grades] which was published by Masonic writers (maçonnologues) of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” We are thus expected to believe that Joseph was influenced by a form of Masonry that apparently did not even exist! But even if Pike in the late nineteenth century was copying a real—as opposed to mythological—French Masonic rite of the eighteenth century, how can Pike’s late nineteenth-century esoteric version of Freemasonry possibly have influenced Joseph Smith?

In a similar ante hoc claim, Homer also appeals to the Rite of Adoption as a possible source of influence on Joseph Smith. John Brooke has made a similar argument, to which we have responded elsewhere:

Brooke indulges in another ante hoc fallacy by claiming that the Mormon temple ceremony could have been influenced at its origin by “the European

---

105 Owens failed to provide a reference to his citation of Homer (p. 168 n. 108); see Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,” 94.
107 Homer, “Similarity of Masonry,” discusses Adoptive Masonry on 29, 40, 94.
Lodges of Adoption,” despite the fact that “the Rite of Adoption . . . has never been introduced into America.” (A failed attempt was first made in 1855.)

Owens has wisely avoided explicitly claiming Adoptive Masonry as a possible antecedent for celestial marriage, hinting instead that plural marriage was introduced into Mormonism under the influence of Cagliostrò’s “Egyptian” Masonic rites, because Cagliostrò introduced women—not polygamy—into his organization (p. 153). This avoids the appearance of anachronism, but not the reality, since Cagliostrò’s “Egyptian” Masonry was itself Adoptive. Thus Cagliostrò’s “Egyptian” Masonry was also not found in the contemporary United States, and indeed had been suppressed in Europe shortly after the fall of Napoleon, two decades before Joseph became a Mason. How Joseph could have been influenced by esoteric French or Italian Masonic orders, thousands of miles away, which did not exist when Joseph was initiated, remains a mystery.

Unfortunately for Owens’s thesis, Joseph was initiated into one of the least esoteric systems of Freemasonry, the York rite. Owens tacitly recognizes that Joseph’s direct contacts with Freemasonry were insufficient to account for its alleged hermetic

109 After a decade of preliminary attempts, the Rite of Egypt (Rite de Misraim) was founded by Cagliostrò in Venice in 1788 and was introduced in France after 1810, where it was linked with anti-Royalist Bonapartist circles. As such, it was suppressed in 1820 and briefly revived between 1838 and 1841. Ligou, Dictionnaire de la Franc-Maçonnerie, 13, 178–81, 1018–19. On Cagliostrò, see ibid., 176–84, and Massimo Introvigne, “Arcana Arcanorum: Cagliostro’s Legacy in Contemporary Magical Movements,” Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture 1 (Spring/Summer 1992): 117–35.
110 It is possible that late eighteenth-century English Freemasons were first influenced by developments on the Continent, then either translated or orally transmitted this lore to English Masons, who then somehow passed it on to American frontier Masons in the mid-nineteenth century. If Owens wishes to maintain such a causal development, he needs to demonstrate it with contemporary primary sources, not simply assert it.
111 Also known as Blue Lodge. Owens himself acknowledges that the basic three degrees of the York rite into which Joseph was initiated had few “layerings of esoteric accretions” (p. 169).
influence. He therefore asserts that "[John C.] Bennett may very well have brought something more than [York] Blue Lodge Masonry to Nauvoo" (p. 172), and that "the Masonry [Bennett] brought to Nauvoo had several unusual occult aspects" (p. 170). Does Owens provide any evidence for these assertions? Simply a further assertion that "Bennett’s interests, including religion, medicine, the military, and Masonry, suggest a person inclined towards investigating the more esoteric aspects of Masonry" (p. 170). Just why interest in religion, medicine, and the military suggests an inclination toward esotericism is never explained.

For an intelligent discussion of these issues to be undertaken we need specific evidence of which Masonic rites were used in Nauvoo, when, by whom, what the rites contained, and what lore they claimed. Because some Masonic rite, somewhere in Europe, in a non-English context, decades before or after Joseph was born, had some esoteric content, we cannot therefore conclude that Joseph Smith in Nauvoo in 1842 was influenced by these ideas. Owens’s thesis requires us to believe that Joseph was influenced by forms of Freemasonry that did not exist in the United States, that had ceased to exist before his birth, that developed only after his death, or—as in the case of the Rite de Perfection—that probably didn’t even exist at all.

**Joseph Smith and Kabbalah**

We now come to the heart of Owens’s article, the contention that Joseph was influenced by Kabbalah. This is the only part of his argument for which he provides new evidence and analysis. But, like the rest of his thesis, this argument evaporates under critical scrutiny. Owens’s thesis is that Alexander Neibaur possessed a library of kabbalistic texts that he read with Joseph Smith, or, at the very least, that Neibaur discussed the ideas found in the Zohar and other kabbalistic books with Joseph. The basic argument runs as follows:112

---

112 I have slightly rearranged the order of Owens’s presentation to clarify the logical relationship of the arguments.
1. Neibaur knew Hebrew and tutored Joseph in that language (pp. 174, 177).

Neibaur mentions or cites from kabbalistic texts in an article in *Times and Seasons* (pp. 175–76).\(^\text{113}\)

These first two propositions are indisputable; beyond this Owens increasingly enters a domain of airy speculation.

3. Neibaur had actually read the texts he cites in *Times and Seasons*—specifically the *Zohar*—rather than excerpting them from a secondary source (pp. 176–78).\(^\text{114}\)

4. Neibaur therefore had the actual texts mentioned in the *Times and Seasons* in his possession in Nauvoo (pp. 119, 176–77).

5. Since Neibaur had this kabbalistic library, and taught Joseph Hebrew, Neibaur therefore taught Joseph Kabbalah (pp. 177–78).

6. Influence of these kabbalistic ideas can be found in Joseph’s King Follett discourse (pp. 178–84).

Owens’s position on the precise degree of Joseph’s direct exposure to Kabbalah is ambiguous. There are three options: Neibaur had read kabbalistic texts and simply told Joseph about some of the ideas found therein; Neibaur read kabbalistic texts to or with Joseph; Neibaur introduced Joseph to the texts, which Joseph read and interpreted on his own. Owens’s rhetoric consistently emphasizes Joseph’s direct contact with Kabbalah. “Neibaur had read to Joseph from” the *Zohar* (p. 178) and Joseph “contacted symbols and lore taken directly from Kabbalah” (p. 119). He “confronted” the *Zohar* (p. 178), “quotes almost word for word” (p. 178), and “agrees, word for word,” with it (p. 180). Joseph’s words are “almost identical with the *Zohar’s* phrasing” (p. 181), and the *Zohar* contains “exactly Joseph Smith’s reading” (p. 181). The “old Bible” to which Joseph referred in the King Follett discourse was the *Zohar*


\(^{114}\) Owens does recognize the possibility that Neibaur could have taken notes from kabbalistic books he read in England and therefore did not have the texts in Nauvoo, or that Neibaur could have obtained his information from a secondary source (p. 176). As noted below, his paper consistently argues for direct access to kabbalistic texts.
(p. 183). All this rhetoric strongly implies that Owens believes that Joseph had direct access to a copy of the *Zohar*.

**Could Joseph or Neibaur Have Read Kabbalistic Texts—Specifically the *Zohar***?

Owens recognizes that the “study [of Kabbalah] at this basic level required some knowledge of Hebrew, access to original Hebrew Kabbalistic texts . . . [and] an adept Kabbalist as a guide” (p. 165). Consistently throughout his article, Owens speaks of the importance of the knowledge of Hebrew for a study of the *Zohar* (pp. 161, 165, 176). This is very odd, since the *Zohar*—the kabbalistic text Owens claims Joseph quoted “almost word for word” (p. 178)—was written largely in Aramaic, not Hebrew. Yet neither the importance nor even the existence of Aramaic in the kabbalistic tradition is ever mentioned by Owens. Although Hebrew and Aramaic are related languages—rather like Spanish and Italian—they are nonetheless distinct. Indeed, “the Aramaic of the *Zohar* has no linguistic parallel” and is an “artificial construction.”

Hebrew and Aramaic are different enough that both medieval kabbalists and modern scholars have actually translated the Aramaic *Zohar* into Hebrew!

---

115 In a personal Internet communication, Owens insists that he never intended to claim that Joseph had personally read the *Zohar*. If this was Owens’s original position, he unfortunately did not make it clear in his article.

116 Of the 24 major divisions of the *Zohar* discussed by Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 216–19, only one, the Midrash ha-Ne’am, “is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic” (ibid., 217; cf. 226). The rest of the *Zohar*, excepting quotations from older Hebrew texts, was written in Aramaic (ibid., 226). Cf. Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:64–68.


118 “The question of translating the *Zohar* into Hebrew had already arisen among the Kabbalists of the 14th century.” Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 239. Scholem cites eight partial or complete translations of the *Zohar* that were made through the early nineteenth century (ibid., 239–40); none were published. The modern edition of Yehudah Ashlag (Jerusalem: Press of the Research Center, 1945–58) includes a Hebrew translation; Isaiah Tishby also translated selections into Hebrew—Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 238, 240, (1957–61); Tishby’s work has been translated into English—Tishby (The *Wisdom of the Zohar*); see xxi-xxxi for a discussion of its translation history. Note also the existence of a large number of Aramaic Targums, translations of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic; see Stephan A.
Would Joseph Smith’s introductory knowledge of Hebrew have allowed him to read the Zohar in Aramaic? There is one piece of evidence that could indicate that it might.\textsuperscript{119} Portions of ten chapters of the Old Testament are in Aramaic (called Chaldean in the early nineteenth century).\textsuperscript{120} A student of Old Testament Hebrew might learn enough Aramaic to deal with these verses. In a reprint from a newspaper, Joseph Smith is quoted as having said, “as a Chaldean might exclaim: Beram etai elauh beshmayauh gauhah rauzeen. (Certainly there is a God in heaven to reveal secrets.)”\textsuperscript{121} This citation is from Daniel 2:28, which is in Aramaic, an indication that some basic study of Chaldean/Aramaic might have occurred at Kirtland or Nauvoo in relation to these Aramaic biblical passages. Does this demonstrate that Joseph Smith knew enough Aramaic to read the untranslated Zohar?

A contextual reading of the Times and Seasons article shows that this passage is a political attack on Joseph Smith reprinted from the Globe newspaper, to which Joseph responded in the previous article in Times and Seasons. The Globe is not favorable to Joseph; it calls him one of the “quadrupeds” in a political “menagerie” in the subsequent paragraph. The Globe presents this Aramaic quotation as a statement by Joseph Smith. But where did the Globe get this passage? Was it from a printed essay? Was it transcribed from a speech? Or are these words put into Joseph’s mouth by his enemies? Part of the thrust of the article is to mock Joseph’s lack of education, saying ironically—in the next line—“Joseph is unquestionably [sic] a great scholar as well as financier.”

Assuming this is an authentic quotation from Joseph—and it is not at all clear that it is—what does it tell us of his knowledge of Aramaic? In fact, the passage is a misquotation. The word transcribed as gauhah should read gaulah (gale\textsuperscript{3}). Somehow the “L” has dropped out. It may be that a transcriber misheard the statement (if it was spoken), or it may be a typographical error by an editor. On the other hand, it could be an indication that Joseph did

\textsuperscript{119} I would like to thank Clark Goble for bringing this to my attention.

\textsuperscript{120} Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26; Daniel 2:4–7:28, along with a few scattered words and phrases.

\textsuperscript{121} Times and Seasons 5 (18 April 1844): 511.

not know Aramaic well, and was in fact mispronouncing or mis­
quoting. Since Hebrew and Aramaic use the same script, it is quite
possible to pronounce Aramaic without being able to read it well,
in the same way that someone today can pronounce Latin without
being able to understand it. Since Joseph was quoting a biblical
text for which an English translation was available, it would be
possible for him to work from the King James Version to the
Aramaic without knowing Aramaic well. Joseph similarly occa­sionally quoted Latin in his Nauvoo-period speeches. Are we to
assume that he knew Latin well, or was he merely using such quo­
tations as rhetorical flourishes according to the oratorical custom
of his day?

But even assuming Joseph could read biblical Aramaic, the
dialect of biblical Aramaic is different from that of the Zohar.\textsuperscript{122}
Furthermore, the Zohar is a very arcane and complicated text. A
basic knowledge of biblical Aramaic would not necessarily be suf­
ficient to allow someone to read it. On the other hand, this passage
from the Globe is at least some evidence—though relatively
weak—that Joseph could read some Aramaic. Ironically, although
this supports Owens’s thesis, it does not help his original paper
since he didn’t present this evidence or even deal with the distinc­
tion between Hebrew and Aramaic at all. The question still
remains: even if Joseph knew sufficient Aramaic to read the
Zohar, did he have access to a copy of the Zohar?

Another question is never addressed by Owens: did Neibaur
know Aramaic? The study of Aramaic was part of a traditional
rabbinic education because much of the Talmud is in Aramaic.
Did Neibaur receive a traditional rabbinic education and therefore
know enough Aramaic to read the Zohar? In fact, there are good
indications that he did not. Traditional Jewish education in Europe
at the turn of the nineteenth century began with the Heder
(primary school), for students from about age five to thirteen, in
which Hebrew, the Torah, and introductory Mishnah were taught.
Some rudimentary biblical Aramaic was occasionally introduced,
but hardly enough to prepare one for the arcana of the Zohar.
Formal Aramaic instruction was for the most part reserved for stu­

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{122} Scholem, Kabbalah, 226.
\end{footnote}
the Aramaic Talmud, and which was intended as preparation for
the rabbinate. 123

However, beginning in the late eighteenth century, European
Jewish education underwent a major transformation as part of the
Haskalah—the Jewish Enlightenment (c. 1770s–1880s). 124 In
new Haskalah schools, although study of Hebrew and the Torah
were retained, "the traditional study of Mishnah and Talmud was
abandoned, even in the secondary schools." 125 Did Neibaur
attend a traditional yeshivah from the age of fourteen to sev­
ten, when he entered medical school (p. 174), or did he attend
one of the new Haskalah schools, which had abandoned the study
of Aramaic and the Talmud for more secular studies? The fact
that Neibaur at age seventeen had learned enough Latin to be
admitted into the Berlin medical school is an excellent indication
that he had attended a Haskalah school where Latin could be
studied, rather than a yeshivah. If Neibaur studied in a yeshivah
from fourteen to seventeen, how did he learn enough Latin to
enter medical school? If not, how did he learn enough Aramaic to
study the Zohar? Since we know that Neibaur knew Latin (p. 174),
it would appear that he must have studied in a Haskalah school,
and therefore did not study Aramaic extensively.

Another important impact of the Haskalah education system
was that its graduates were emancipated from the ghetto, received
secular university degrees, assimilated to mainstream gentile soci­
ety, and went on to important secular careers in the middle class.
Many abandoned Judaism and converted to Christianity. 126 In
this regard Neibaur is also a classic example of a Haskalah Jew—
he attended a gentle university, embarked on a career as a dentist,
converted to Christianity, and assimilated to gentle society. And,
as Scholem notes, there was a "fervent assault on the Kabbalah by
the Haskalah movement in the 19th century." 127 Indeed, as noted
above, the study of the Zohar was decreasing in both Christian and

123 William W. Brickman, "Education," in EJ 6:382–466, esp. 413–26; the article provides a general background on the history of Jewish education.
Jewish circles in the late eighteenth century, at which time "students of the Zohar declined in number, and the Kabbalah became once more, particularly in the East, a secret doctrine confined to restricted circles." Thus we find Owens claiming that Neibaur and Joseph were influenced by kabbalistic ideas during precisely the period of kabbalism’s least influence—between its decline in the mid-eighteenth century and its revival in the late nineteenth.

Finally, although Neibaur had some early Jewish education in which he learned Hebrew, he stopped Jewish education at the age of seventeen to pursue secular studies at the University of Berlin, converting to Christianity at about twenty (p. 174); thus, even if he had attended a traditional yeshivah, his study of Jewish Aramaic literature must have remained fairly superficial. Furthermore, according to traditional kabbalistic practice, initiates into the mysteries of Kabbalah were to be at least thirty years old and well versed in rabbinic literature. So why would any kabbalist have taught Neibaur—a teenage yeshivah dropout who converted to Christianity at age twenty—the sacred mysteries of the Zohar, which were not to be taught to anyone younger than thirty? As Owens himself notes, kabbalistic texts are so arcane that students invariably need an "adept Kabbalist as a guide" (p. 165). Thus, even if Neibaur could read Aramaic well—which is unlikely—it does not demonstrate that he had read the Zohar, only that he was capable of reading it.

Although it is impossible to know for sure, the scant evidence indicates that neither Neibaur nor Joseph Smith had more than a basic knowledge of biblical Aramaic. The fact that Joseph was tutored by Neibaur in languages indicates that whatever the level

128 Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, 1:29; on the decline of Christian Kabbalah, see ibid., 1:27.
129 Ibid., 1:29.
130 There is, however, one piece of evidence that Neibaur might have known some Aramaic. In his Times and Seasons article he states "The place where those who roll themselves . . . is Mount Olivet, according to the Chaldaic translation [i.e., Targum] 8:5, Song of Solomon. Solomon prophesies there that at the resurrection, Mount Olivet will open itself so that the righteous may come out of it" (Neibaur, "The Jews," 222). I will argue below that Neibaur was citing a secondary source here. I would like to thank Clark Goble for bringing this passage to my attention.
of Joseph’s knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, it was inferior to Neibaur’s. It is unlikely that either man had a sufficient grasp of Aramaic to delve into the extremely arcane, abstruse, and untranslated Zohar.\footnote{Wirszubski maintains that “Pico [della Mirandola] could write an exercise in Hebrew prose composition moderately well. But to read a kabbalistic book in the original his mastery of Hebrew would have had to be of an entirely different order which would take years to acquire. . . . It is quite out of the question that Pico could at that time [1486] have read an untranslated kabbalistic book unaided.” Pico della Mirandola’s Encounter, 4 (Wirszubski is not discussing the Aramaic Zohar here, but Hebrew kabbalistic texts). If Pico, one of the greatest polymathic scholars of the Renaissance, was unable to read kabbalistic texts after his introductory study of Hebrew, why should we assume Joseph Smith would have been able to?} Since Neibaur converted to Christianity before the requisite age of thirty, it is highly unlikely that he ever studied Kabbalah. But, granting for the sake of argument that either Neibaur or Joseph knew Aramaic sufficiently well, the question still remains—is there any evidence that they in fact actually read the Zohar?

**Did Neibaur Have a Kabbalistic Library?**

Owens argues that Alexander Neibaur “apparently . . . [owned] an impressive library of Kabbalistic writings” and “evidently new [sic] Kabbalah and its principal written works” (p. 173). Owens repeatedly asserts different versions of this idea: Neibaur “not only knew something of Kabbalah, but apparently possessed a collection of original Jewish Kabbalistic works in Nauvoo” (p. 175). Neibaur “probably both possessed the [kabbalistic] texts and had a general knowledge of their contents” and “had access to the works he quoted” (p. 176). These possibilities are eventually turned into actualities when Owens speaks unequivocally of the kabbalistic “books Neibaur possessed” (p. 177). Owens admits that “where and how Neibaur first came in contact with Kabbalah remains a mystery” (p. 174).

One explanation for this “mystery” is, of course, simply that he never studied Kabbalah at all. What evidence does Owens present that Neibaur had this alleged kabbalistic library? No kabbalistic books have survived. No one in Nauvoo ever saw or mentioned these alleged books. Despite their undoubtedly great
value and bulk, they are not mentioned in Neibaur’s estate. Neither Neibaur nor anyone else ever quoted from them before or after the *Times and Seasons* article. No *uniquely* kabbalistic ideas or terms surface in Latter-day Saint thought. For all intents, these rare valuable books—important enough to supposedly transform Latter-day Saint doctrine in the King Follett Discourse—simply vanished off the face of the earth. And all this study of kabbalistic texts was purportedly going on at precisely the time Joseph was exhibiting the Egyptian papyri. If, as alleged, Joseph believed the *Zohar* was the “old Bible” (p. 183), why did Joseph not exhibit the *Zohar* and other rare kabbalistic texts along with the Egyptian papyri?

Owens’s argument is that since Neibaur quotes kabbalistic texts in his *Times and Seasons* article, he must have had direct access to those texts. There is, of course, a counterexplanation—that Neibaur obtained the information he presents in his article from a secondary source.132 Owens maintains that “a single uncited compilation of kabbalistic materials containing this wide collection of citations has not yet been brought to my attention” (p. 176 n. 127). Let me assist. The probable source for Neibaur’s information is the *Sefer Nishmat Hayyim* of Manasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), originally published in 1651.133 Manasseh was a brilliant man, “regarded in the world of scholarship as the leading representative of Hebrew learning,”134 who founded the first Hebrew printing press in Amsterdam in 1626. He wrote the *Nishmat* in the prime of his intellectual life. Manasseh’s *Nishmat* is

---

132 Owens recognizes this possibility (p. 176 n. 127), along with the options that Neibaur studied the texts in Europe, but did not have them with him in Nauvoo.  
134 Cecil Roth, “Manasseh ben Israel,” in *EJ* 11:856.
the first text quoted by Neibaur in his *Times and Seasons* article. All other texts cited by Neibaur date from before 1651, and therefore could have been read and quoted by Manasseh. A comparison of Manasseh’s sources used in the *Nishmat* shows that most of the sources cited by Neibaur were also used by Manasseh.\(^\text{135}\) Finally, Manasseh’s *Nishmat* was reprinted in 1841, the year Neibaur left England for Nauvoo, and would therefore have been easily accessible in a contemporary edition.\(^\text{136}\)

Owens’s theory requires that Neibaur have access to dozens of rare Hebrew books, some available only in editions that were two or three hundred years old. Neibaur must have read all these books and personally selected those passages relating to the theme of his short essay. After all this immense labor, for some unexplained reason Neibaur never refers to or cites from this extensive library of rare books again. Furthermore, for some arcane reason never explained by Owens, Neibaur appears to have studied only books published before 1651, ignoring all the more accessible and inexpensive works published in the subsequent two centuries! The alternative theory requires that Neibaur have access to only one book, reprinted in the year before he published his article, a book by a world-famous Jewish scholar who wrote an entire book on the subject of Neibaur’s short essay, who had been an international book dealer, and who is known to have read and cited nearly all the works mentioned by Neibaur. Thus only one book need have been misplaced or overlooked in Neibaur’s estate, rather than an entire kabbalistic library.\(^\text{137}\)

\(^{135}\) Ross, “A Study of Manasseh ben Israel’s ‘Nishmath Hayyim,’” 10–23, provides a list of the main sources used in Manasseh’s *Nishmat*, which can be compared with the sources cited by Neibaur in the *Times and Seasons* (see appendix). Ross notes that Manasseh quotes from all the standard Talmudic literature and the *Zohar*.

\(^{136}\) Manasseh ben Israel, *Sefer Nishmat Hayim* (1651; reprint, Stettin: Schrentzel, 1841).

\(^{137}\) I have neither the time nor the inclination to read Manasseh’s entire work searching for the possible references cited in Neibaur’s *Times and Seasons* article. Further research in this direction could conclusively demonstrate one way or another if the *Nishmat* was Neibaur’s major or sole source for his article.
Did Joseph Smith Cite the Zohar in the King Follett Discourse?

The heart of Owens’s thesis is that Joseph Smith was influenced by the Zohar in developing the ideas found in the King Follett discourse (pp. 178–84). The King Follett discourse focuses on a number of unique Latter-day Saint doctrines: the possibility of human deification, the plurality of gods, the hierarchy and council of the gods, and the idea that God was once as man is now. In his attempt to establish parallels between Kabbalah and the King Follett Discourse, Owens takes both the Zohar and Joseph’s sermon out of context and seriously distorts their ideas. He provides two examples from the King Follett discourse in which he claims Joseph is quoting “almost word for word from the first section of the Zohar” (p. 178). These examples are highly problematic, and will be analyzed in detail.

*Genesis 1:1 and the Creation.* Owens asserts that Joseph derived his interpretation of Genesis 1:1, at least in part, from the Zohar, which “agrees, word for word, with Joseph’s reading” (p. 180), and is “exactly Joseph Smith’s reading” (p. 181). A careful analysis of these texts demonstrates that Owens is, at best, exaggerating. The entire passage from the Zohar will be cited in order to provide a full context for the ideas that allegedly influenced Joseph. The portions of the text that Owens quotes are

---

highlighted in bold face. Readers can decide for themselves how much this passage "resonates" with Latter-day Saint thought when read in its proper context.  

At the outset the decision of the King [Keter = Crown = En Sof, the first sefirot] made a tracing in the supernal effulgence, a lamp of scintillations, and there issued within the impenetrable recesses of the mysterious limitless a shapeless nucleus enclosed in a ring, neither white nor black nor red nor green nor of any colour at all. When he [Crown = En Sof] took measurements, he fashioned colours to show within and within the lamp there issued a certain effluence from which colours were imprinted below. The most mysterious Power [Crown = En Sof] enshrouded in the limitless cave, as it were, without cleaving its void, remaining wholly unknowable until from the force of the strokes there shone forth a supernal and mysterious point [Hokhmah = Wisdom = second sefirot]. Beyond that point [Wisdom] there is no knowable, and therefore it [Wisdom] is called Reshith (beginning), the creative utterance which is the starting-point of all.

It is written: And the intelligent shall shine (yazhiru) like the brightness (zohar) of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3). There was indeed a "brightness" (Zohar). The Most Mysterious [Crown =

---

139 In order to match Owens's translation, I will use Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, trans., The Zohar, 5 vols., 2nd ed. (London: Soncino, 1984); the first edition, with the same pagination, was published from 1931–34. References to the Zohar will be made to the editio princeps pagination, with the Sperling and Simon pages following an equal sign. A superior translation of much of the Zohar, with very useful notes and commentary can be found in Tishby, The Wisdom of the Zohar, which I have used in my interpretation. For the original Aramaic text I have used Sefer ha-Zohar (Jerusalem: Yanid ha-Sefarim, 1994).

140 The sefirot are ten emanations of divine will, authority, creative power, or spiritual force, which were first mentioned in the Sefer Yetzira (sixth century A.D. or earlier), and which were the objects of extensive discussion and speculation in kabbalistic literature. See Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, 1:269–370; Scholem, Kabbalah, 23–26.
En Sof] struck its void, and caused this point to shine. This “beginning” [reshith = Wisdom] then extended, and made for itself a palace [Binah = Palace = third sefira] for its honour and glory. There [in Palace = Binah] it [Beginning = Wisdom] sowed a sacred seed which was to generate for the benefit of the universe, and to which may be applied the Scriptural words “the holy seed is the stock thereof” (Is. 6:3). Again there was Zohar [brightness] in that it sowed a seed for its glory, just as the silkworm encloses itself, as it were, in a palace of its own production which is both useful and beautiful. Thus by means of this “beginning” [bereshith = Wisdom] the Mysterious Unknown [En Sof] made this palace [Aram. heykala, lit. “temple” = Binah]. This palace [Binah] is called Elohim, and this doctrine is contained in the words, “By means of a beginning [Wisdom] (it) [En Sof] created Elohim [Palace = Binah].” The Zohar [brightness] is that from which were created all the creative utterances through the extension of the point of this mysterious brightness. Nor need we be surprised at the use of the word “created” [bara] in this connection, seeing that we read further on, “And God created [bara] man in his image” (Gen. 1:27). A further esoteric interpretation of the word bereshith is as follows. The name of the starting-point of all is Ehyeh (I shall be). The holy name when inscribed at its side is Elohim, but when inscribed by circumscription is Asher, the hidden and recondite temple,141 the source of that which is mystically called Reshith.142 The word Asher [i.e., the letters Aleph, Shin, Resh from the word bereshith] is ana-grammatically Rosh [head], the beginning which issues from Reshith [Wisdom]. So when [15b] the point [Beginning = Wisdom] and the temple [Palace = Binah

---

141 The Aramaic reads heykala, literally “temple,” or “palace,” as translated here. However, Sperling and Simon occasionally translate this term as “palace” (as above), which makes the relationships in their translation unclear.

142 The Zohar is here speculating on the name of God, “Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh = I am who I am,” found in Exodus 3:14.
= Elohim] were firmly established together, then bereshith combined the supernal Beginning [En Sof] with Wisdom. Afterwards the character of that temple [Temple/Palace = Binah = Elohim] was changed, and it was called “house” (bayith). The combination of this with the supernal point which is called rosh gives bereshith, which is the name used so long as the house was uninhabited. When, however, it [bayith = Binah = Elohim] was sown with seed [by Wisdom] to make it habitable, it was called Elohim, hidden and mysterious. The Zohar [brightness] was hidden and withdrawn so long as the building was within and yet to bring forth, and the house was extended only so far as to find room for the holy seed. Before it had conceived and had extended sufficiently to be habitable, it was not called Elohim, but all was still included in the term Bereshith. After it had acquired the name of Elohim, it brought forth offspring from the seed that had been implanted in it.144

Could Joseph possibly have formulated the ideas in the King Follett discourse from this passage in the Zohar? Even the bold-face passages selectively taken out of context by Owens bear little resemblance to Joseph’s King Follett Discourse:

I will go to the very first Hebrew word—BERESHITH—in the Bible and make a comment on the first sentence of the history of creation: “In the beginning...” I want to analyze the word BERESHITH. BE—in, by, through, and everything else; next, ROSH—the head; ITH. Where did it come from? When the inspired man wrote it, he did not put the first part—the BE—there; but a man—an old Jew without any

---

143 The Hebrew letters B-Y-T (bayith) when anagrammatically added to R-Sh (rosh) can spell B-R-E-Sh-Y-T = be-re ’shith = in the beginning.
authority—put it there. He thought it too bad to begin to talk about the head of any man. It read in the first: “The Head One of the Gods brought forth the Gods.” This is the true meaning of the words. ROSHITH [BARA ELOHIM] signifies [the Head] to bring forth the Elohim.145

A comparative chart of the two readings gives the following:

Joseph reads Genesis 1:1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rosh [ith]</th>
<th>bara</th>
<th>elohim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Head [God]</td>
<td>brought forth</td>
<td>the gods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Zohar interprets Genesis 1:1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>be</th>
<th>reshith</th>
<th>bara</th>
<th>elohim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by means of</td>
<td>the Beginning</td>
<td>[it] created</td>
<td>the palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Hokhmah</td>
<td>#1 Keter</td>
<td>= Wisdom</td>
<td>#3 Binah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to Owens’s claim that the Zohar’s interpretation is “exactly Joseph Smith’s reading” (p. 181), I find that Joseph’s understanding is quite different.

1. Joseph drops the Hebrew particle be, because it was added by “an old Jew without any authority.”146 The Zohar retains the particle, understanding it in an instrumental sense—“by means of”—rather than the usual temporal sense—“at the time of” (both are within the normal range of Hebrew usage).147

2. Joseph transforms reshith into its triliteral Semitic root rosh, dropping the ith (presumably because it, too, was added by the Jew without authority). He understands rosh to mean “the Head [God].” The Zohar retains reshith, understanding it as a proper

145 King Follett Discourse: Cannon, 37; Writings of Joseph Smith, 345, 350–51, 358; Larson, 202; TPJS, 348. I am citing the Larson version.

146 King Follett Discourse: Cannon, 37–38; Writings of Joseph Smith, 358; Larson, 202; TPJS, 348. One might reasonably ask why Joseph would have considered the Zohar to be the authoritative “old Bible” when it kept the unauthoritative be.

name, "Beginning," a metaphorical reference to the second sefira, Wisdom. For the Zohar the "Head God" would be the first sefira, Keter/En Sof, not the second sefira, Wisdom/Beginning.

3. Joseph understands bara to mean to "bring forth" or to "organize." He explicitly rejects ex nihilo creation.

The learned doctors who are preaching salvation say that God created the heavens and earth out of nothing. . . . You ask them why, and they say, "Doesn’t the Bible say He created the world?" And they infer that it must be out of nothing. The word create came from the word BARA, but it doesn’t mean so. What does BARA mean? It means to organize; the same as a man would organize and use things to build a ship. Hence, we infer that God Himself had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter—which is element and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time He had.148

Although the Zohar has a complicated understanding of creation by emanation, its fundamental understanding of bara is "to create" ex nihilo. "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created His worlds, He created them from nothing, and brought them into actuality, and made substance out of them; and you find the word bara (He created) used always of something that He created from nothing, and brought into actuality."149 Thus Joseph’s understanding of creation is exactly opposite that of the kabbalists.

4. Joseph and the Zohar each have a different subject for the verb bara. Joseph sees rosh, the "Head [God]," as creating, while the Zohar understands an implied pronoun it, referring to the first sefira—Keter/Crown/En Sof—as doing the creating, by means of the Beginning (reshith), a metaphor for the second sefira Wisdom. For the Zohar "the Beginning"—reshith—is not the grammatical subject of the verb bara, while for Joseph it is.

---

149 Zohar Hadash, Bereshit, 17b, in Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, 2:572; see 2:549–55 for a discussion of the complexities of the kabbalistic understanding of creation.
5. The only similarity between these two interpretations is that, for both, *elohim* is the object rather than the subject of the verb. But even there, Joseph understands *elohim* as the object of the sentence, and interprets it literally as “gods.” While the *Zohar* also sees *elohim* as the object of the sentence, it interprets it quite metaphorically as “palace,” referring to the third emanation, the sefirot Binah (Understanding).

When read in context and understood correctly, it is very difficult to see how this passage from the *Zohar* “agrees word for word” (p. 180) or is “exactly” (p. 181) like Joseph’s interpretation. Indeed, I am baffled as to how anyone could be expected to read this passage from the *Zohar*, and come up with Joseph Smith’s understanding of creation and the nature of God.

**Plurality of Gods.** Owens next alleges that Joseph’s concept of the plurality and hierarchy of the gods derives—at least in part—from his reading the *Zohar*. Speaking of Joseph’s understanding of the word *elohim*, Owens maintains that

Smith translates *Elohim* in the plural, as “the Gods.” The word is indeed in a plural Hebrew form, but by the orthodox interpretative conventions Joseph was taught in his Kirtland Hebrew class . . . it is read as singular. In the *Zohar*, however, it is interpreted in the plural. This is witnessed throughout the *Zohar* and appears clearly in the following paragraph from the opening sections of the work, where the phrase “Let us make man” (Gen. 1:26) is used as the basis for a discussion [in the *Zohar*] on the plurality of the gods: “‘Us’ certainly refers to two, of which one said to the other above it, ‘let us make,’ nor did it do anything save with the permission and direction of the one above it, while the one above did nothing without consulting

150 It should be noted that Joseph’s reading is standard English syntax with Hebrew vocabulary.

151 Owens provides no evidence for his assertion that the term *elohim* is consistently used with plural verbs in the *Zohar*. The idiosyncratic use of *elohim* in the *Zohar* is discussed below (see pp. 308–11). In the KJV Bible, when the verb associated with *elohim* is singular, it is generally translated as “God.” When the verb is plural, *elohim* is generally translated as “gods,” or occasionally “angels.”
its colleague. But that which is called ‘the Cause above all causes,’ which has no superior or even equal, as it is written, ‘To whom shall ye liken me, that I should be equal?’ (Is. 40:25), said, ‘See now that I, I am he, and Elohim is not with me,’ from whom he should take counsel. . . . Withal the colleagues explained the word Elohim in this verse as referring to other gods.” Within this passage is both the concept of plurality and of the hierarchy of Gods acting “with the permission and direction of the one above it, while the one above did nothing without consulting its colleague.” This interpretation is of course echoed in the King Follett discourse and became a foundation for all subsequent Mormon theosophy.152 (p. 182)

Owens’s analysis here is replete with difficulties. Owens claims that the passages he quotes are a commentary on Genesis 1:26. While it is true that this passage is found in the general section on Genesis 1:26 (Zohar 1:22a–24b = 1:90–97), the specific text cited by Owens is actually—in typical Zoharic fashion—a lengthy digression on Deuteronomy 32:39 (Zohar 1:22b–23a = 1:92–94), which reads “See now that I, I am he, and elohim is/are not with me.” Here is the entire passage in question, with the sections quoted by Owens in bold type.

R[abbi] Simeon then proceeded, taking as his text: *See now that I, I am he, and Elohim is not with me, etc.* (Deut. 32:39). He said: “Friends, here are some profound mysteries which I desire to reveal to you now that permission has been given to utter them. Who is it that says, ‘See now that I, I am he’? This is the Cause which is above all those on high, that which is called the Cause of causes [Wisdom = Hokhmah]. It is above those other causes [the Sefirot], since none of those

---

152 Citing Zohar 22b–23a = 92–94. Owens’s page references from the Zohar are inaccurate. He claims that the passage is from 1:23b (p. 182 n. 143), while in fact the material before the ellipses is from 1:22b = 93 and the material after the ellipses is from 1:23a = 94; cf. Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:258–59. Incidentally, despite Owens’s rhetoric, it is not at all clear that Mormonism has a “theosophy.”
causes does anything till it obtains permission from that which is above it, as we pointed out above in respect to the expression, ‘Let us make man’ [in Gen. 1:26]. ‘Us’ certainly refers to two, of which one [Wisdom] said to the other above it [En Sof], ‘let us make’, nor did it [Wisdom] do anything save with the permission and direction of the one above it, while the one above did nothing without consulting its colleague. But that which is called ‘the Cause above all causes’ [Crown = Keter = En Sof], which has no superior or even equal, as it is written, ‘To whom shall ye liken me, that I should be equal?’ (Is. 40:25), said, ‘See now that I, I am he, and Elohim [the third Sefirah Binah] is not with me’ [Deut. 32:39], from whom he should take counsel, like that of which it is written, ‘and God said, Let us make man’.”

The colleagues here interrupted him and said, “Rabbi, allow us to make a remark. Did you not state above that the Cause of causes [Hokhmah/Wisdom] said to the Sefirah Kether [En Sof], ‘Let us make man’?”

He answered, “You do not listen to what you are saying. There is something that is called ‘Cause of causes’ [Hokhmah], but that is not the ‘Cause above all causes’ [En Sof] which I mentioned, which has no colleague of which it should take counsel, for it is unique, prior to all, and has no partner. Therefore it [Crown = Keter = En Sof] says: ‘See now that I, I am he, and Elohim is not with me’, of which it should take counsel, since it has no colleague and no partner, nor even number, for there is a ‘one’ which connotes combination, such as male and female, of whom it is written, ‘for I have called him one’ (Is. 51:2); but this [En Sof] is one without number and without combination, and therefore it is said: ‘and Elohim is not with me’.”

They all rose and prostrated themselves before him, saying, “happy the man whose Master agrees with him in the exposition of hidden mysteries which have not been revealed to the holy angels.”
He proceeded: “Friends, we must expound the rest of the verse [Deuteronomy 32:39], since it contains many hidden mysteries. The next words are: *I kill and make alive, etc.* That is to say, through the *Sefirot* on the right side I make alive and through the *Sefirot* on the left side I kill; but if the Central Column [of the Tree of the Sefirot] does not concur, sentence cannot be passed, since they form a court of three. Sometimes, [23a] even when they all three agree to condemn, there comes the right hand which is outstretched to receive those that repent; this is the *Tetragrammaton*, and it is also the Shekinah, which is called ‘right hand’, from the side of [the Sefira] *Hesed* (kindness). When a man repents, this hand saves him from punishment. But when the Cause which is above all causes [En Sof] condemns, then ‘there is none that delivers from my hand’.” [Deut. 32:39]

Withal the colleagues explained the word *Elohim* in this verse [Deut. 32:39] as referring to other gods,\(^{153}\) and the words “I kill and make alive” as meaning “I kill with my Shekinah him who is guilty, and preserve by it him who is innocent.”

What, however, has been said above concerning the Supreme Cause [En Sof] is a secret which has been transmitted only to wise men and prophets. See now how many hidden causes there are enveloped in the *Sefirot* and, as it were, mounted on the *Sefirot*, hidden from the comprehension of human beings: of them it is said, ‘for one higher than another watcheth’ (Eccl. 5:7). There are lights upon lights, one more clear than another, each one dark by comparison with the one above it from which it receives its light. As for the Supreme Cause [En Sof], all lights are dark in its presence.

\(^{153}\) The 1994 Aramaic edition of *Sefer ha-Zohar* I consulted has almost an additional page of Aramaic text before and after this passage that is not found in the Sperling and Simon translation, again indicating the importance of consulting the original texts Smith and Neibaur supposedly read, rather than relying on a translation from almost a century later.
Another explanation of the verse “Let us make man in our image after our likeness” was given by the colleagues, who put these words into the mouth of the ministering angels. Said R. Simeon to them, “Since they [the angels] know what has been and what will be, they must have known that he [Adam] was destined to sin. Why, then, did they make this proposal [to create Adam]? Nay more, Uzza and Azael [two angels, who eventually fell] actually opposed it [the creation of Adam]. For when the Shekinah said to God ‘Let us make man’, they [Uzza and Azael] said, ‘What is man that thou shouldst know him? Why desirlest thou to create man, who, as thou knowest, will sin before thee through his wife? Who is the darkness to his light, light being male and darkness female?’”

The passage from the Zohar cited by Owens before the ellipses is, in fact, a digression within a digression, referring back to the original theme of the entire section of the commentary, Genesis 1:26. Owens uses ellipses to cut an entire page of the text in the English translation, during which time the theme shifts to Deuteronomy 32:39. The antecedent of “this verse” in Owens’s post-ellipses phrase “withal the colleagues explained the word Elohim in this verse as referring to other gods” is not Genesis 1:26 as Owens claims (p. 182), but Deuteronomy 32:39!

In context it is quite clear that the Zohar makes no mention of the hierarchy or council of the gods mentioned by Joseph; the Zohar speaks instead of the participation of the sefirot (emanations), the ministering angels and the Shekinah (literally the “dwelling,” but roughly the Holy Spirit), none of which are mentioned by Joseph. The exact antecedent of the phrase “other gods” in this passage is ambiguous. It may well be a technical term from the Old Testament referring not to the true God, but to

155 King Follett Discourse: Cannon, 37; Writings of Joseph Smith, 345, 350–51, 358; Larson, 202–3; TPJS, 348, and the book of Abraham 4 and 5 for information on the council of the gods.
the false pagan gods. Contra Owens, who claims that elohim in the Zohar refers to a plurality of gods (pp. 182–83), the term elohim has a technical meaning in the Zohar. “The name Elohim is often used for three Sefirot jointly: Binah [#3 Understanding], Gevurah [#5 Power], and Malkhut [#10 Sovereignty].”

Another set of code names for the sefirot includes

a range of ten names [of God] . . . [which] are applied particularly to the ten sefirot. The names in the order of the sefirot are: Ehyeh [= I; #1 Crown], Yah [= shortened form of YHVH; #2 Wisdom], YHVH with the vocalization of Elohim [= YeHoViH; #3 Understanding], El [= God; #4 Love], Elohim [= God/gods; #5 Power], YHVH [= Yahweh/Jehovah; #6 Beauty], YHVH Zeva’ot [= Yahweh of Armies, translated in the KJV as “Lord of Hosts”; #7 Eternity], Elohim Zeva’ot [= God of Hosts; #8 Majesty], Shaddai [= Almighty; #9 Foundation], Adonai [= Lord; #10 Sovereignty].

Thus, when properly understood, this passage does not refer to a plurality of gods, but to specific sefirot that are given the name elohim by the kabbalists.

For the kabbalist, these names of God, including elohim, do not represent ontologically separate divine beings—as in Joseph Smith’s understanding—but different powers or emanations of the single divine reality. “The Torah can be seen as a great storehouse of the names of God in different combinations, all of which

156 The loci classici are Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 5:7 “thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The phrase other gods (Hebrew elohim akherim) is ubiquitous throughout the Old Testament (see, for example, Deuteronomy 6:14; 17:3; 28:36; Judges 2:19; 1 Kings 14:9; Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 723c, provides many other references), almost always referring to false pagan deities.


158 Ibid., see Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, 1:269, cf. 269–307 for a detailed discussion of the sefirot in the Zohar. “There is hardly any mention of Sefirot [by that name in the Zohar], apart from the later sections. Instead we have a whole string of names: `levels,’ `powers,’ `sides’ or `areas’ (sitrin), `worlds,’ `firmaments,’ `pillars,’ `lights,’ `colors,’ `days,’ `gates,’ `streams,’ `garments,’ `crowns,’ and others” (Tishby 1:269). Note that the term elohim is not included in Tishby’s list of the usual names for the sefirot.
designate specific forces of emanation."159 Although some Jewish opponents of kabbalism accused them of polytheism, the kabbalists themselves rejected this criticism. The sefirot were not separate gods, but were emanations or instruments of God. Kabbalists frequently described the relationship between God and the sefirot metaphorically as the relationship between a coal and its flame or a lamp and its light.160

*Anthropomorphism*. Another significant difference between the kabbalistic and Joseph’s understanding of God is divine anthropomorphism.161 Joseph Smith’s understanding of God is explicitly and unrepentantly anthropomorphic. “God Himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves—that is the great secret! . . . If you were to see Him today, you would see Him in all the person, image, fashion, and very form of a man, like yourselves.”162 Although kabbalistic literature uses anthropomorphic language extensively, the kabbalists were insistent that such language was strictly metaphorical and did not literally describe the nature of God. As the fourteenth-century kabbalist Joseph Gikatilla explains it

> There is no creature that can know or understand the nature of the thing called “hand” or “foot” or “ear” [of God] and the like. And even though we are made in the image and likeness [of God], do not think for a moment that “eye” [of God] is in the form of a real eye, or that “hand” [of God] is in the form of a real hand. . . . Know and understand that between Him and us there is no likeness as to substance and shape, but the forms of the limbs that we have denote that they are made in the likeness of signs that indicate secret,

---

celestial matters, which the mind cannot know except through a kind of reminder.\(^{163}\)

No two concepts of God could be further apart.

In summary, Owens misleadingly presents his own misreading as if it were the original intent of the Zohar. For Owens’s thesis to have any validity we are thus required to believe that Joseph derived support for his concept of God from Owens’s own late twentieth-century misreading of an early twentieth-century English translation of a document that the kabbalistic adept Neibaur supposedly read to Joseph from the Aramaic original!

What Is the “Old Bible”? Owens offers a final instance of alleged influence of the Zohar on Joseph Smith.

In the King Follett Discourse, Joseph stated that he would go to the “old Bible.” In Kabbalistic lore, the commentary of the Zohar represented the oldest biblical interpretation, the secret interpretation imparted by God to Adam and all worthy prophets after him. . . . Was then the “old Bible” he [Joseph] used the Zohar? (p. 183)

Besides the obvious problem that a rhetorical question does not equal evidence, it is in fact quite clear that the term “old Bible” was generally used by early Latter-day Saints to refer to the Old Testament, just as Joseph Smith does in the King Follett Discourse. Joseph insisted that he could prove his doctrines “from

---

\(^{163}\) Cited by Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 1:286–87; Tishby concludes that for a kabbalist “to take the [anthropomorphic] symbols literally as denoting the actual essence of God is considered to be a form of idolatry” (p. 287). Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, provides numerous details and references to the various views of anthropomorphism throughout ancient and medieval Jewish thought, providing evidence that the more archaic Jewish thought was more anthropomorphic (and therefore closer to Joseph Smith’s), while later talmudic and medieval Jewish thinkers interpreted early Jewish anthropomorphic language metaphorically. For example, Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 84–85, maintains that those who believe in divine corporeality “hate” God. They are worse than idolaters; they are infidels. I would like to thank Daniel C. Peterson for this reference.
the Bible."164 "I suppose I am not allowed to go into an investigation of anything that is not contained in the Bible," Joseph continued. "If I should, you would cry treason, and I think there are so many learned and wise men here who would put me to death for treason. I will, then, go to the old Bible and turn commentator today."165 Joseph then proceeded with his exegesis of Genesis 1:1 that Owens maintains was based on the Zohar. Are we to believe that Joseph Smith said that if he used sources other than the Bible people would "cry treason," and then promptly proceeded to quote from the Zohar in order to avoid this criticism?

Early Latter-day Saints clearly understood the term "old Bible" to refer to the Old Testament or even the Bible as a whole. Orson Hyde disagreed with the view that "that Old Bible was for the Jews, and has nothing to do with us; that is the Old Testament." Because of this, he maintained, "the Christian world by their prejudices have driven us away from the Old Bible, so we must now appeal to the New Testament."166 Heber C. Kimball used the phrase in the same sense: "Was there any revelation that we should come to the mountains? Yes, and there were predictions in the old Bible that we should come here."167 John Taylor even used the phrase to refer to the New Testament: "any man that has the testimony of Jesus has the spirit of prophecy; for 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,' so says the old Bible."168

The Absence of Uniquely Kabbalistic Ideas. The great methodological problem of Owens—again mirrored in Brooke's method—is his failure to provide parallels between unique kabbalistic ideas and Latter-day Saint thought.169 There are hundreds of uniquely hermetic, alchemical, and kabbalistic authors, people,

164 King Follett Discourse: Cannon, 29–30; Writings of Joseph Smith, 345; Larson, 201; TPJS, 346.
165 King Follett Discourse: Cannon, 37; Writings of Joseph Smith, 345; Larson, 202; TPJS, 358.
166 Orson Hyde, 6 October 1856, JD 2:79–80.
books, and terms. Why is it that not a single one of these appears in the writings of Joseph Smith or other early Latter-day Saints? Why are Joseph’s alleged references to esoteric thought always vague and allusive, never specific and concrete? Why do the alleged parallels between Joseph and esoteric thought generally find biblical antecedents, to which Joseph often explicitly refers?

Owens’s claim that Joseph was influenced by the Zohar offers an excellent test in our search for unique kabbalistic ideas. When Owens insists that the “interpretation of Genesis 1:1 [that influenced Joseph] is not deeply hidden in the Zohar, but constitutes its opening paragraphs” (p. 181), he is seriously misrepresenting the structure of the Zohar. He repeatedly asserts that the passages he examines are “from the opening sections of the” Zohar (p. 182), or “from the first section of the Zohar” (p. 178). In reality the passages cited by Owens cannot possibly be described as constituting the “opening paragraphs” of the Zohar. They are, in fact, one-fourth of the way into the first volume—pages 93 and 94 of a 376-page translation.

Owens’s thesis requires us to believe that Neibaur or Joseph waded through forty-five pages170 of arcane esoteric Aramaic (ninety-four pages in English translation) to have arrived at the passages that allegedly influenced Joseph. If Joseph accepted the Zohar as the authoritative “old Bible” (p. 183), and had read forty-five pages of Aramaic to get to the passages he is “quoting almost word for word” (p. 178), should we not find some evidence of the unique ideas from the other pages that Joseph or Neibaur must have read to get to the passages Owens claims he quotes? Where in the thought of Joseph Smith, for example, are the following ideas from the Zohar:

- the importance of Rabbi Simeon (1:1a = 1:3, ff.)171
- speculations on the mystical interchangeability of mi (who) and mah (what), and eleh (these), and elohim (god/gods) (1:1b–1:2a = 4–7)

---

170 The early printed editions of the Zohar are referenced by one number for both the recto and verso pages. Thus page 23a from which Joseph supposedly quotes, is in fact the forty-fifth page of the Zohar.
171 In the following citations, the first reference is to the editio princeps of the Zohar, while the second is to the Sperling and Simon translation.
• the story of the personification of the Hebrew Alphabet and the selection of the letter *aleph* for the creation (1:2b–3b = 1:9–13)
  • the “six chief supernal directions” (1:3b = 1:13)
  • the celestial lamp (1:3b = 1:14)
  • the celestial ascent of Rabbi Hiya and his encounter with the angelic R. Simeon (1:4a–4b = 1:15–18)
  • the importance of esoteric interpretation of the Torah (1:4b–5a = 1:19–21)
  • the miraculous appearance of Rabbi Hamnuna to Rabbis Eleazar and Abba, and his esoteric teachings (1:5b–7a = 1:22–28)
  • the idea of the higher and lower gardens of Eden (1:7a = 1:29)
  • Elisha’s use of the seventy-two mystical names to resuscitate the son of the Shunammite widow (1:7b = 1:30–31)
  • speculations on the bride and *Shekinah* (1:8a–9a = 1:32–37)
  • angelic ignorance of Aramaic (1:9a–9b = 1:38–39)
  • the seven levels of hell (1:9b = 1:39)
  • the archangel of the gentiles (1:10a = 1:41–42)
  • kabbalistic demonology (1:9b = 1:39–40, 1:10b = 1:43–44)
  • the heavenly academy (1:10b = 1:44)
  • the fourteen precepts of the Torah and their relationship to creation (1:11b–14b = 1:47–60)
  • how the study of the Torah transforms men into angels (1:12b = 1:52)
  • the importance of phylacteries (1:13b–14a = 1:57–58)
  • the importance of having intercourse on the Sabbath without using candles (1:14a–14b = 1:60)
  • the mystical origins of the Hebrew letters and vowels (1:15b = 1:65).172

Are we really to believe that Joseph selected only these items from the *Zohar* for which he himself provided biblical support, ignoring these and many other ideas that are unique to that document?

172 The *Zohar* goes on in a similar vein for almost another thirty translated pages before reaching the passage Joseph allegedly cites. Examples of uniquely kabbalistic ideas could thus be further multiplied.
But let us momentarily grant, for the sake of argument, that Joseph or Neibaur somehow got a copy of the Zohar in the Nauvoo period and misread the Aramaic in precisely the same manner that Owens has misread the English translation 150 years later. Is such a proposition at all helpful in explaining the origin of the idea of plurality of gods in Latter-day Saint theology? In 3 Nephi 28:10, published in 1830, we learn that “ye [the righteous Nephites] shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I [Christ] am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one.” That the faithful shall be even as Christ and the Father certainly implies human deification, and thereby plurality of gods. Are we to assume that the Zohar influenced the writing of the Book of Mormon? How do the alleged kabbalistic influences on Joseph in 1844 explain Doctrine and Covenants 76:57–58? “And [those in the Celestial Kingdom] are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God.” This passage was revealed in February 1832, several years before Joseph began studying Hebrew, and a decade before his alleged studies in the Zohar. Why is the concept of the plurality of gods found in 1832, if it derives from the Zohar? Furthermore, this phrase is explicitly drawn from Christ’s exposition of Psalm 82:6 as found in John 10:34–35. If someone insists on looking beyond revelation for the origin of the idea of the plurality of gods, then John 10:34–35 and Psalm 82:6 are without question Joseph’s sources for this doctrine.

In light of all this, Owens’s claims of “substantial documentary evidence” (p. 119) to support his thesis seem exaggerated at best.

---

173 I would like to thank Daniel C. Peterson for calling this passage to my attention.
174 Doctrine and Covenants 121:28 also does not fit Owens’s theory: “A time [shall] come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest.” This passage was written in March 1839, again several years before Joseph’s alleged kabbalistic studies. Van Hale provides a useful summary of many additional sources that refer to Joseph’s doctrines of human deification and the plurality of gods. “The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse,” 224–25.
Alleged Kabbalistic Influences in Early Utah Mormonism

Owens provides several examples of what he feels represent kabbalistic influences on post-Nauvoo Mormon thought.

The Seal of the Priesthood. Owens maintains that the all-seeing eye in the “Seal of the Priesthood” was drawn from hermetic sources of the seventeenth century (p. 147 fig. 7), ignoring the much more accessible Great Seal of the United States, our national seal since 1782.175 Discussing the relationship of the “All Seeing eye” (also called the “providential eye”) of the United States Great Seal and Masonic symbolism, Patterson and Richardson conclude, “it seems likely that the designers of the Great Seal and the Masons took their symbols from parallel sources, and unlikely that the seal designers consciously copied Masonic symbols.”176 As a symbol of the omniscience and providence of God, the all-seeing eye was fairly ubiquitous in the early nineteenth century. With a crown placed over it you have a symbol that God is King, or of the Kingdom of God. No links with obscure, rare, and expensive seventeenth-century books need be posited.

Adam-God as Adam Kadmon. Owens claims that “the Adam-God doctrine may have been a misreading (or restatement) by Brigham Young of a Kabbalistic and Hermetic concept relayed to him by the prophet [Joseph Smith]” (p. 184). The major support Owens provides for this claim is that in gematria the names Adam and Jehovah both equal 45 (p. 127).177 Using standard gematria, Adam/ADM does equal 45 (alef = 1, dalet = 4, mem = 40). However, Jehovah = Yahweh = YHWH does not equal 45, but 26 (yod = 10, he = 5, vav = 6, he = 5). The equation of YHWH with

176 Patterson and Richardson, The Eagle and the Shield, 532.
177 Gematria is a system of replacing numbers for the letters of a name (A = 1, B = 2, etc.), combining and recombining the numbers, and speculating about the mystical implications of the resultant numbers. See Scholem, Kabbalah, 337–43.
ADM is derived from a special system of gematria known as "filling (millui)," in which you take the spelling of the names of the letters that make up the name, do a standard gematria on the spellings, and get a new number. Under one system of "filling" the gematria of the names of the letters of YHWH can equal forty-five. Are we to believe that Joseph Smith secretly transmitted such an idea to Brigham Young? The real question here is what primary sources were available in the early 1840s—to which Joseph had access—that expounded this idea? To demonstrate that Joseph did "filling" gematria on the name of Adam, it is not sufficient to find a modern secondary source that briefly describes it.

Owens further maintains that Adam was seen by Brigham Young as the kabbalistic Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man (p. 184). The fact that Adam of Eden and Adam Kadmon have the same name is not, however, as significant as it may seem. Owens once again either misunderstands or misrepresents the kabbalistic doctrine. ADM/Adam in Hebrew simply means man or human. It is generally not a proper name in the Bible. Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man of kabbalism, is not Adam the first man of the Garden of Eden. The Adam of the Bible was called by kabbalists by a different name: "Adam Ha-Rishon [Adam the First], the Adam of the Bible, corresponds on the anthropological plane to Adam Kadmon, the ontological primary man." The first being which emanated from the light [En Sof] was Adam Kadmon, the 'primordial man'. Adam Kadmon is nothing but a first configuration of the divine light which flows from the essence of En Sof." Once again the metaphysical assumptions of Kabbalah—in contradistinction to Mormonism—are fundamentally Neoplatonic. From the En Sof emanates a great light, which becomes Adam Kadmon. From this Primordial Man ensue further emanations, culminating in "the last reflection of Adam Kadmon, who makes his appearance in the lowest form of 'making'
('asiyah) as Adam, the first man of Genesis.’181 Adam is the earthly reflection, on the material plane, of the supernal Adam Kadmon—this is how kabbalists interpret man being in the image of God. But Adam of the Garden is not ontologically the same being as Adam Kadmon, nor is either of the two Adams the ontological equivalent of God.182 In light of all this, how Brigham Young’s ideas about Adam-God can be seen as based on kabbalistic thought is a bit mind-boggling.

Orson Hyde and the Tree of the Sefirot. Owens finally claims that a diagram of the “Kingdom of God” done by Orson Hyde in 1847 (p. 1:6 fig. 12) was in fact, “the most essential symbolic element of Kabbalah, the ‘mystical shape of the Godhead’ contained in the image of the [Tree of the] Sefirot as redrawn by a principal and influential seventeenth-century Christian kabbalist, [Robert] Fludd” (p. 187). This is sheer fantasy. First, Hyde’s diagram doesn’t look anything like the Tree of Sefirot. Second, Hyde never calls it a Tree of Sefirot. In his article, Hyde never mentions anything kabbalistic or hermetic. Here is Hyde’s own description of the meaning of his diagram:

The above diagram shows the order and unity of the kingdom of God. The eternal Father sits at the head, crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Wherever the other lines meet, there sits a king and a priest unto God, bearing rule, authority, and dominion under the Father. He is one with the Father, because his kingdom is joined to his Father’s and becomes part of it.183

Hyde’s article goes on in the same vein. Why should any of this be thought to have anything to do with Kabbalah?

Conclusions

In summary, Owens’s thesis cannot bear the weight of critical scrutiny. He demonstrates an unfamiliarity with many important

182 See discussion by Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, 1:295–98.
secondary sources and recent scholarship, which leads to numerous errors of fact and interpretation. Because of lack of evidence to support his thesis, he frequently resorts to unrestrained assertion and speculation. He often fails to define his terminology precisely and engages in semantic equivocation in an attempt to make fundamentally dissimilar ideas and practices seem similar. He does not adequately recognize nor deal with the complex methodological problems of the relationship between parallelism and causality. He provides no solid primary evidence to demonstrate that Joseph Smith had a profound knowledge of the esoteric traditions. He fails to distinguish between Hebrew and Aramaic, or to demonstrate that either Neibaur or Joseph had sufficient knowledge of Aramaic to read the Zohar. There is no evidence that Neibaur owned a kabbalistic library, while there is a simple counterexplanation for the appearance of references to kabbalistic texts in his Times and Seasons article. Owens’s interpretation of the King Follett Discourse suffers from a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of both Joseph Smith’s ideas and those found in the Zohar. A careful and critical analysis demonstrates only vague parallels between Joseph’s ideas and those of the Zohar.

Owens provides no examples of uniquely kabbalistic ideas in the writings of early Mormons—the methodological imperative if Owens’s case is to be substantiated. He ignores the fact that many of the ideas Joseph supposedly derived from Kabbalah antedate Neibaur’s arrival in Nauvoo. The ideas that Joseph allegedly borrowed from kabbalism are also found in biblical texts, which Joseph Smith is known to have studied intensely. Since Joseph consistently offered biblical precedent to support his revelations and teachings, why do we need kabbalism to explain the development of his thought?

Throughout his article Owens employs some interesting forms of rhetorical legerdemain in an attempt to bolster his flimsy case. He is selective in which evidence he presents and which he ignores. He repeatedly conflates ideas from several different traditions and periods by simply asserting that they are all part of one metatradition. He ignores the possibility of explaining his alleged parallels by recourse to biblical or other shared antecedents. His relatively few references to primary sources are
frequently misrepresentations or misunderstandings. He often simply asserts his conclusions with no supporting evidence.

My friend Matt Moore aptly described Owens’s theory as another attempt in the grand tradition of Quinn and Brooke at *historia ex nihilo*—the creation of history out of nothing. His efforts to pull a magic rabbit out of his hat to bolster environmental explanations of Joseph Smith’s revelations are simply smoke and mirrors. While some in the audience may applaud, most will immediately be able to “bust” the trick.
Appendix: Sources Mentioned by Alexander Neibaur¹⁸⁴

At the end of his article, Owens lists books supposedly found in Neibaur’s “library” (p. 191). In order to demonstrate the availability of many of these texts through a common source, I have prepared the following list of the texts mentioned by Neibaur, rearranged according to thematic categories. A bullet by the text name indicates that the text is known to have been cited in Manasseh’s Nishmat.

1. Traditional Rabbinic and Talmudic Sources (Most Cited by Manasseh)¹⁸⁵

- 1.1 R. Jacanan, Rabbi Jocanan (Neibaur 221b, Owens 193), and R. Jonathan (Neibaur 222a): Probably R. Johanan ben Zakkai, first-century sage and leader of rabbinic Judaism (EJ 10:148–54). Owens does not relate Jonathan with these other two spellings (p. 193).
- 1.2 Bereshith Rabba (Neibaur 222a): Owens (193) cites R. Moses ben Isaac ha-Darshan’s Bereshith Rabbati, a Midrashic text on the book of Genesis written in the eleventh century. The early aggadic midrash on the book of Genesis (from which ha-Darshan wrote his work) is also known as Bereshith Rabbah (EJ 7:399–402; 12:429).

¹⁸⁵ Ross notes that Manasseh quotes from “the fundamental sources of Jewish tradition, such as the Bible, Talmuds, Midrashim, Commentaries, Codes, Zohar, and Bahir” (p. 18).
• 1.5 Talmud Tract Sanhedrim (Neibaur 222a, Owens 193): Talmudic tractate.
• 1.6 Talmud Tract Resokim (Neibaur 222a, Owens 193): Talmudic tractate.
• 1.7 Talmud Tract Ketuboth (Neibaur 222b, Owens 193): Talmudic tractate.
• 1.8 Book Siphri (Neibaur 234a, Owens 194): halakhic midrash to the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy (EJ 14:1519).
• 1.9 Rabbi Judah (Neibaur 233b): Possibly the R. Judah of the fourth century who wrote the Sifra—part of the “motivated halakhot”—a collection based on Leviticus (EJ 11:316). Not identified by Owens (p. 194). Ross (19) lists an additional three Judahs cited by Manasseh: Judah ben Samuel, Judah ben Jacob, and Judah ha-Levi.

2. Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Writers

• 2.1 Rabbi Manesse ben Israel in Nishmath Cajim (Neibaur 221a, Owens 191): transliterated Manasseh ben Israel, wrote Nishmat Hayyim (1651). He founded the earliest Hebrew printing press in Amsterdam (1626) (EJ 11:855–57; 10:604).
• 2.2 R. Isaac Aberhaph in Menorat Hamoors (Neibaur 221a): Cited by Manasseh (Ross 18). Owens (pp. 191–92) believes that Neibaur mistakenly confused Isaac Aberhaph with Israel al-Nakawa (EJ 2:672–73). It is more likely that Neibaur is referring to Isaac Aboab (EJ 2:90–93), a fourteenth-century rabbi, whose Menora ha-Ma'or was first published in Constantinople in 1514, and was reprinted in over seventy editions (EJ 11:344.)
• 2.3 R. Abarbanel (Neibaur 222b): Probably a variation on Abarbanel; see 2.4 below. Not identified by Owens.
• 2.4 R. Isaac Abarbanel (Neibaur 221b, Owens 192): Cited by Manasseh (Ross 18). Isaac ben Judah Abravanel (or Abravanel), famous fifteenth-century philosopher and biblical exegete (EJ 2:103–9).


• 2.7 R. Levi bar Gerohonon (Neibaur 222a, Owens 193): Cited by Manasseh (Ross 19). Levi ben Gershom, a thirteenth-century biblical commentator and philosopher whose major work was Sefer Mihamot Adonai, written in 1329, not widely circulated (EJ 11:92, 94).

• 2.8 Pesikta Raba (Neibaur 222b): Pesikta Rabbbati, a medieval midrash on the festival of the year, printed several times, but the critical edition was in 1880 (EJ 13:335). This traditional midrash was undoubtedly available to Manasseh.

3. Kabbalistic Sources

• 3.1 R. Baccay/Bacay/Bachay (Neibaur 221a, 233b): Cited by Manasseh (Ross 18). Owens claims Neibaur was quoting R. Samson Bacchi of Casale Monferrato (p. 192). The more likely possibility is Bahya ben Asher ben Hlava, a thirteenth-century kabbalist who wrote Kad ha-Kemah, a widely circulated book on the foundations of faith (EJ 4:104–5). Neibaur explicitly references this work by Bahya as well (Neibaur 234a; Owens 194 fails to make the connection between the two).186

• 3.2 Book Rad Hakemah (Neibaur 234a): Kad ha-Kemah, by Bahya ben Asher, a thirteenth-century philosopher (see 3.1 above under R. Baccay).

• 3.3 Medrash Neelam (Neibaur 221b, Owens 192): Midrash ha-Neelam is a principal section of the Zohar, the kabbalistic

186 Other options include Pseudo-Bahya, author of On the Essence of the Soul, an eleventh or twelfth-century book written originally in Arabic and translated into Hebrew in 1896 (EJ 4:103) or Bahya ben Joseph ibn Paquda, an eleventh-century philosopher who wrote Hovot ha-Levavot (Duties of the Heart), a book on the nature of the soul written in Arabic (1080), translated into Hebrew (1161) and widely circulated (EJ 4:105–6).
collection of esoteric teachings in the Torah written in the fourteenth century (EJ 16:1196).

- 3.4 Sohar (Neibur 222a, 222b): The Zohar.

- 3.5 Rabbi Naphtali in Emakhamelek (Neibur 221b, 222a, Owens 192): Emek ha-Melekh is an important and widely circulated kabbalistic work written by Naphtali ben Jacob Elhanan Bacharach and published in 1648 (EJ 4:49; 10:549).

- 3.6 Jalkut Kodosh, Jalkut Kadash, Talkut Kadash (Neibur 221b, 222a, Owens 192): A seventeenth-century anthology of kabbalistic writings. Yalkut ha-Makhiri and Yalkut Shimoni are both anthologies of aggadic midrashim possibly written in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, respectively (EJ 16:706–9).


4. Uncertain Identification Because of Insufficient Data

- 4.1 R. Solomon Jarkian (Neibur 222b): Not mentioned by Owens. There are numerous classical and medieval writers named Solomon. Possibly Solomon ben Judah (ibn Gabriel), who is cited by Manasseh (Ross 19).

- 4.2 Rabbi Joshua ben Menaser (Neibur 233b): Cited by Owens as not yet identified (p. 194).

- 4.3 R. Elias (Neibur 222a): One of the numerous Elijahs of Jewish history. Cited by Owens as not yet identified (p. 193).

Thus, of the twenty-five sources mentioned by Neibur that can be identified with relative certainty, twenty-one are known to have been used by Manasseh. It is quite possible that other sources were used by Manasseh, but were not identified or mentioned by Ross.

Reviewed by John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper

“Joseph Smith’s Use of the Apocrypha”: Shadow or Reality?

After a hiatus of a quarter century, the Tanners have revisited comparisons between themes and phrases in the Book of Mormon and the King James Apocrypha. In doing so, they build upon their comparison of Book of Mormon and New Testament themes and phrases, as illustrated in their *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (1990) and *Answering Mormon Scholars* (1994). Undaunted by the poor reviews of these earlier works—some of which were written by the present authors⁠¹—they continue to press a case that is weak at best. Though their latest foray was in a newsletter rather than a book, we review it because it is, in a sense, an appendix to their earlier books.

The Tanners have, in their previous works, objected to the use of King James Bible wording in the Book of Mormon, indicating that it is evidence of “plagiarism” on the part of Joseph Smith. They especially object to the inclusion of New Testament expressions in the Book of Mormon because the New Testament was written long after Lehi left Jerusalem. In previous reviews, we have

---

demonstrated two important facts to which the Tanners have not responded:

1. Many of the New Testament passages draw upon the Old Testament, which was the Bible of the time. Using the Tanners’ reasoning, we should consider the New Testament writers plagiarists and compare the gospel writers and the apostles—as the Tanners did Joseph Smith (pp. 8–9)—with murderer/forger Mark Hofmann.

2. The King James Bible had a great deal of influence on nineteenth-century American speech. For example, in his 1994 review, Tvedtnes demonstrated this by showing that Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address is replete with biblical expressions. Many other such examples could be given.

One must deal with these issues before condemning the Book of Mormon as a forgery, as the Tanners have done. Their excur-sus (pp. 8–9) comparing the Book of Mormon with the work of forger Mark Hofmann seems intended to imply that forgery is part of the Mormon way of life, while at the same time trying to snatch up credit for having discovered at least some truth—that the “Salamander Letter” was a fabrication. We are happy to give the Tanners credit for helping to uncover the Hofmann fraud, but this does not mean that everything else they write is gospel truth.

---

2 Tvedtnes, review of Answering Mormon Scholars, 235–37.
3 The Tanners’ comparison of the Book of Mormon with the Hofmann forgeries ignores the fact that the latter were very short. The “Salamander Letter,” their primary example, comprises merely a page and a half of handwriting. The first (1830) edition of the Book of Mormon contained over 588 pages. Short phrases of two to four words may prove significant in such a short document, but they are insignificant in a volume of 588 pages. For an important discussion of parallels, see Hugh Nibley, “The Comparative Method,” in The Prophetic Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 193–206.
4 The Tanners are also quick to take credit for discovering the name Nephi in the Apocrypha. They write that, “while Mormon scholars were diligently seeking to find evidence that Nephi is an Egyptian name, we discovered the actual name in the King James version of the Apocrypha” (p. 2). By implication, no “Mormon scholars” were sufficiently acquainted with the Apocrypha to have read it. I (Tvedtnes) noted the name Nephi in 2 Maccabees 1:36 (and Nephis in 1 Esdras 5:21) during my senior year in high school, 1958–59, and still have the handwritten note made at the time, pasted inside my copy of the KJV Apocrypha. I acknowledged the existence of the name Nephi in 2 Maccabees in a note to a 1977 article: John A. Tvedtnes, “A Phonemic Analysis of Nephite and
“Written in Egyptian?”

The Tanners note that, since the Jews had once been slaves in Egypt, “they despised the Egyptians. Consequently, faithful Jews certainly would not want their sacred scriptures to be written in that language,” as the Book of Mormon claims (p. 3). This far-reaching conclusion ignores the fact that many centuries had passed since the Israelite bondage in Egypt—time enough to abandon any hatred of the Egyptians. Indeed, the Israelite kings Solomon (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16; 10:28–29; 2 Chronicles 1:16–17; 9:28) and Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:40; 12:2; 2 Chronicles 10:2) had close ties with Egypt. During Lehi’s time, the Jews were allied with the Egyptians against the Babylonians, who were expanding their empire westward, and some Jews even went to Egypt for safety (2 Kings 18:21, 24; 23:34–35; 25:26; 2 Chronicles 36:3–4; Isaiah 30:1–4; 31:1–3; 36:6, 9; Jeremiah 2:18, 36; 24:8; 26:21–23; 37:5–11; 41:16–17; 42:14–19; 43:2, 7; 44:1, 12–15, 24–28; Ezekiel 17:15).

Moreover, examples of Jews keeping records in Egyptian and even writing Hebrew texts in Egyptian characters and vice versa are known from archaeological excavations at Arad and Ein Qudeirah. In addition, it has long been acknowledged by scholars that Hebrew texts of the ninth through the sixth centuries B.C. employed Egyptian numeric symbols intermingled with Hebrew text. There are numerous other examples of other northwest...
Semitic texts from before and after Lehi that are written in Egyptian script. In view of the mounting evidence, it is surprising that the Tanners continue to maintain that Israelite prophets could not have used the Egyptian writing system for their records. This is, in fact, one area in which discoveries made in the last several decades show that Joseph Smith was right on target long before he could have been right unless he really was a prophet.

To bolster their position that Joseph Smith’s “claim that the Egyptian language was used presented a real problem” for the Book of Mormon, the Tanners cite “J. N. Washburn, a dedicated defender of the Book of Mormon” (p. 3). However, Washburn’s book was published in 1954, before the excavation of either Arad (1960s) or Ein Qudeirah (late 1970s). Washburn could not have known what we know now. Not surprisingly, the Tanners do not refer to Tvedtnes’s 1971 articles nor to Stephen Ricks’s 1992 article, which discuss Jewish writings in Egyptian script from the time of Lehi.

**Apocryphal Sources and Methodological Issues**

Before examining specific parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha, it is necessary to understand the methodology employed by the Tanners. This involves some of their basic assumptions about Joseph Smith’s acquaintance with the Apocrypha and his use thereof in composing some of the stories found in the Book of Mormon, notably in 1 Nephi.

---


Joseph Smith’s Access to the Bible

Although the Smith family apparently had a Bible at the time that Joseph Smith had his First Vision (Joseph Smith—History 1:11–12), it is not clear whether Joseph Smith used a Bible while translating the Book of Mormon. The Tanners, citing an earlier study by Reed Durham, note that previous to commencing his revision of the Bible, Joseph Smith had already purchased a Bible containing the Apocrypha at E. B. Grandin’s bookstore in Palmyra (p. 1). By citing the Durham source, they imply acceptance of his 1828 date for the purchase. But they note that “Wesley P. Walters [a late anti-Mormon], however, claimed that the actual date of purchase was October 8, 1829, not October 8, 1828” (p. 1). The 1829 date is clearly the correct one. The flyleaf of the Bible carries an inscription in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery: “The history of the Jews, the property of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery [sic] Cowdery. Bought at E. B. Grandin’s Book Store, Palmyra, Wayne County, New York, October 8, 1829.” Joseph Smith had not met Oliver Cowdery until April 1829. Moreover the phrase the history of the Jews is suggestive of Book of Mormon descriptions of the brass plates (1 Nephi 3:3; 5:12; 2 Nephi 29:4, 12–13), which were similar in some respects to the biblical record (1 Nephi 13:23; cf. the allusion to the Bible in Mormon 7:8). This phrase occurs only in those portions of the Book of Mormon dictated after Oliver Cowdery arrived on the scene.

Best estimates suggest that the Book of Mormon translation was completed by early June 1829, with the copyright, containing the title page, being registered on 11 June 1829. By October 1829, when Oliver Cowdery purchased the Bible, the Book of Mormon was already at press and enemies of Joseph Smith such as Abner Cole were publishing satirical quips about it in the Palmyra tabloid, The Reflector. In these articles Cole alludes to

---


11 In the “Mosiah first” theory, which the Tanners accept, the passages in 1 and 2 Nephi were not translated until after Joseph had moved to Fayette, New York.

12 The Reflector, 2, 16, and 23 September 1829; “Our Own Affairs,” The Reflector, 30 September 1829; The Reflector, 7 October 1829. All these
the copyright page,13 “the building of the TEMPLE OF NEPHI” (2 Nephi 5:16),14 and the “New Jerusalem” (3 Nephi 21:23–24; Ether 13:4–10),15 indicating that the portions of the Book of Mormon that speak of these things had already been dictated by the Prophet. The Bible purchased in October 1829 could not have been a source of the Book of Mormon for Joseph Smith.

Even had Joseph Smith used a Bible during the dictation sequence—which is doubtful, since he had Oliver purchase one for him soon afterward—we cannot assume, as the Tanners do, that he had one which contained the Apocrypha. In the past, we simply took for granted that all Bibles during the 1820s contained the Apocrypha. The Tanners’ recent claims prompted one of the authors (Roper) to look into the matter. Having examined 143 American Bible printings of the Authorized King James Version published between 1800 and 1830, he found that only 40 (less than a third) contained the Apocrypha. Even if Joseph Smith had a Bible during the translation period, there is only one chance in three that it contained the Apocrypha.

Even if Joseph owned a Bible during the translation of the Book of Mormon, the evidence of witnesses who were present seems to exclude the possibility that he used it. His wife Emma, who for a short time acted as scribe and often performed chores in the same room where Joseph and Oliver were translating, recorded that “he had neither manuscript nor book to read from” and he couldn’t have hidden it from her even if he tried.16 David Whitmer, who along with others witnessed the work at his home in Fayette, New York, reported that he did not. “Mr. Whitmer emphatically asserts as did Harris and Cowdery, that while Smith was dictating the translation he had no manuscript notes or other means of knowledge save the seer stone and the characters as shown on the plates, he being present and cognizant how it was

appeared in the Palmyra newspaper before the purchase of the Bible at Grandin’s bookstore on 8 October 1829.

13 “The Gold Bible, by Joseph Smith Junior, author and proprietor, is now in press and will shortly appear. Priestcraft is short lived.” The Reflector. 2 September 1829.

14 The Reflector, 7 October 1829, emphasis in the original.

15 The Reflector, 23 September 1829; The Reflector, 7 October 1829.

done." When asked whether Joseph Smith had manuscripts at any time that he could have read from during the dictation, Whitmer replied, "No, sir. We did not know anything about the Spaulding manuscript at that time." "Father Whitmer, who was present very frequently during the writing of this manuscript affirms that Joseph Smith had no book or manuscript, before him from which he could have read as is asserted by some that he did, he (Whitmer) having every opportunity to know." These witnesses provide evidence that Joseph, whether he owned a Bible with the Apocrypha or not, did not have one open before him or hidden in his hat while he dictated the text of the Book of Mormon. Indeed, David Whitmer declared that "Smith was ignorant of the Bible" and that "when translating he first came to where Jerusalem was spoken of as a 'Walled City' he stopped until they got a Bible & showed him where the fact was recorded." The fact that they had to go get a Bible implies that there was not one immediately present during the dictation of the Book of Mormon. More important, the "walls of Jerusalem" are mentioned in the Book of Mormon only in 1 Nephi 4:4, which is part of the story the Tanners believe Joseph Smith plagiarized from the Apocrypha (p. 6). Even if the Bible they had to get to confirm the existence of the walls was in the house or in the very room where Joseph was dictating the text, because they had to get it shows that he didn't have it beside him on the table where he could glean ideas from the Apocrypha.

Borrowing from the Apocrypha

The Tanners argue that since there are conceptual, thematic, and linguistic parallels between some portions of the Apocrypha and portions of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith obviously borrowed or "plagiarized" these concepts, themes, and language.

19 Interview in St. Louis Republican, 16 July 1884, cited in ibid., 139–40.
20 Interview with M. J. Hubble on 13 November 1886, cited in ibid., 211.
from the Apocrypha. This makes us wonder how they view the writers of the New Testament. Parallels between New Testament writings and the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are widely acknowledged by biblical scholars. Such show that these extrabiblical texts strongly influenced the language and style of Jesus and the apostles. The United Bible Society’s Greek New Testament lists over 116 New Testament allusions or quotations from the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.21 These include not only the books known as Apocrypha but additional works such as I Enoch. According to R. H. Charles, “The influence of I Enoch on the New Testament has been greater than that of all the other apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books taken together,”22 and “Nearly all the writers of the New Testament were familiar with it, and were more or less influenced by it in thought and diction.”23 He then lists over 128 examples from New Testament writers.24 He notes that these influences were so pervasive that, “without a knowledge of the Pseudepigrapha it would be impossible to understand” the author of Revelation.25

As Latter-day Saints, we believe that John received a genuine vision from God, which he conveyed in the book of Revelation through apocalyptic language and symbolism found in the religious literature of ancient Judaism. In like manner, we accept the fact that Joseph Smith received a genuine revelation when he translated the Book of Mormon, which he conveyed in an English biblical style (King James) that would be understandable to the people of his day.

Moreover, it does not necessarily follow that, because apocryphal and pseudepigraphic works are late, they do not also contain some true information or elements that are much older. The fact that New Testament writers such as John and Jude quote or allude to these works suggests to believers in the Bible that they

23 Ibid., ix, n. 1.
24 Ibid., xciv–cii.
contained at least some truth of historical or doctrinal value. Margaret Barker has recently argued that *Enoch*, which was so influential to the early Christian community, contains many elements that date to preexilic times. “What we have in Enoch is the writing of a very conservative group whose roots go right back to the time of the first temple, when there were still kings in Jerusalem.”26 The Tanners’ argument mistakenly assumes that all the elements found in their parallels are late and unique when, in fact, this may not be the case at all.

In previous reviews of the Tanners’ works, we have argued that the language of the King James Bible played an important role in Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon not because he “plagiarized” from the Bible, but because the Bible was part of his cultural and linguistic heritage. The same could be said of other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century translators. For example, in the following chart we compare the work of two different translators, Robert H. Charles27 and Howard C. Kee, each of whom translated the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.28 While Charles’s work was done around the turn of the century, Kee’s is more contemporary. While both are considered excellent translations, Charles chose to follow the biblical style of the King James Version, while Kee used more modern terminology.29

---


29 Two recent translators have, in some cases, preferred to use the KJV style in their English translation. These are marked * in the column labeled “Charles” wherever they agree with Charles in using the words we have italicized. See H. W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charles</th>
<th>Kee</th>
<th>KJV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*reserved for eternal punishment (T Reuben 5:5)</td>
<td>destined for eternal punishment (T Reuben 5:5)</td>
<td>reserved unto judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*lusted after (T Reuben 5:6)</td>
<td>filled with desire (T Reuben 5:6)</td>
<td>lusted after (1 Cor. 10:6; Rev. 18:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*the Mighty One of Israel (T Simeon 6:5)</td>
<td>the Great One in Israel (T Simeon 6:5)</td>
<td>the mighty One of Israel ( Isa. 1:24; 30:29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thrones and dominions (T Levi 3:8)</td>
<td>thrones and authorities (T Levi 3:8)</td>
<td>thrones, or dominions (Col. 1:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*the fashion of the Gentiles (T Levi 8:14)</td>
<td>the gentile model (T Levi 8:14)</td>
<td>the fashion of this world (1 Cor. 7:31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laid waste (T Levi 16:4)</td>
<td>razed to the ground (T Levi 16:4)</td>
<td>[&quot;lay/laid waste&quot; very common; &quot;rase&quot; only in Ps. 137:7]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*filthy lucre (T Judah 16:1)</td>
<td>sordid greed (T Judah 16:1)</td>
<td>filthy lucre (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written upon the hearts of men (T Judah 20:3)</td>
<td>written in the affections of man (T Judah 20:3)</td>
<td>will write it in their hearts (Jer. 31:33); write them upon the table of thine heart (Prov. 3:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*to offer Him the first-fruits (T Judah 21:5)</td>
<td>to present as offerings (T Judah 21:5)</td>
<td>[&quot;firstfruits&quot; very common]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>them that have familiar spirits (T Judah 23:1)</td>
<td>ventriloquists (T Judah 23:1)</td>
<td>them that have familiar spirits (Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Isa. 19:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Kee</td>
<td>KJV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*And from your root shall rise a stem; And from it shall grow up the rod of righteousness to the Gentiles (T Judah 24:5-6)</td>
<td>And from your root will arise the Shoot, and through it will arise the rod of righteousness for the nations (T Judah 24:6)</td>
<td>And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. . . And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek (Isa. 11:1, 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*singleness of eye (T Issachar 3:4)</td>
<td>singleness of vision (T Issachar 3:4)</td>
<td>thine eye is single (Luke 11:34; Matt. 6:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*singleness of (your) heart (T Issachar 4:1; 7:7)</td>
<td>integrity of heart (T Issachar 4:1); sincerity of heart (T Issachar 7:7)</td>
<td>singleness of [your] heart (Acts 2:46; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bowels of mercy (T Zebulon 7:3)</td>
<td>merciful in your inner self (T Zebulon 7:3)</td>
<td>bowels of mercies (Col. 3:12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| we were all scattered unto the ends of the earth (T Naphtali 6:7)     | we were all dispersed, even to the outer limits (T Naphtali 6:7)     | [*"the ends of the earth"
used in passages relating to scattering (Isa. 26:15) and gathering (Isa. 43:6; Mic. 5:4) of Israel] |
| *it stirreth him up (T Gad 4:4)                                       | he conspires (T Gad 4:4)                                             | stir him up (Num. 24:9; Job 41:10; Song. 2:7; 3:5; 8:4; 2 Pet. 1:13) |
| *true repentance after a godly sort (T Gad 5:7)                       | for according to God’s truth, repentance destroys disobedience (T Gad 5:7) | for godly sorrow worketh repentance (2 Cor. 7:10)                   |
| *abstaineth from meats (T Asher 2:8)                                  | is abstemious in his eating (T Asher 2:8)                            | to abstain from meats (1 Tim. 4:3)                                  |
Charles & Kee

beguile me (T Joseph 6:2)

lead me astray (T Joseph 6:2)

*let this suffice me (T Joseph 7:6)

that is enough (T Joseph 7:6)

KJV

beguiled me (Gen. 3:13; 29:25)

let it suffice (Deut. 3:26; Ezek. 44:6; 45:9)

One-Sided Clusters

On pages 11–12, after listing ten parallels between 2 Esdras 13 and the Book of Mormon, the Tanners affirm, "It is difficult for us to believe that all of these parallels to the Book of Mormon could have occurred by accident when the same wording falls within just 14 verses of the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras" (p. 12). But upon discovering that these ten parallels are scattered through ten chapters of six separate Book of Mormon books, one is less impressed. A similar problem of one-sided clusters appears on the other end of the spectrum with their parallels to Maccabees and Judith (pp. 2–8). "Twenty-eight of the thirty-two parallels to the Apocrypha are found in the first five chapters of the Book of Mormon... It seems obvious that the only answer to these remarkable parallels is that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Apocrypha" (p. 8). The Tanners also discuss two additional parallels to 2 Maccabees which they do not include in their list of 32, bringing the total to 34 (pp. 2–3). The 34 parallels listed by the Tanners were gleaned from 13 chapters in the Apocrypha, scattered through three separate apocryphal books (1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, and Judith) having a total of 47 chapters. The reader can well imagine that the larger the corpus the more likelihood of finding parallels. Also of interest is that 21 of the 34 parallels were published by the Tanners in 1968. This means that, in the intervening 27 years, they have only been able to produce 13 additional parallels between the Book of Mormon and three books of the Apocrypha (1–2 Maccabees and Judith). Despite this unimpressive performance, they declare, "It will be very difficult for Mormon scholars to explain this extraordinary cluster of similarities" (p. 8). Given the paucity of examples and the scattered nature of alleged sources, this hardly amounts to much. Perhaps they define extraordinary and remarkable differently than we do.
Apocryphal “Parallels”

In examining the Tanners’ parallels between the Book of Mormon and the KJV Apocrypha, we find that, as with their earlier New Testament parallels, there is little reason to suspect that Joseph Smith borrowed them to “forge” the Nephite record.

Let’s examine some of the parallels that the Tanners suggest Joseph Smith plagiarized from the Apocrypha, noting other parallels found in the Old Testament but not mentioned by the Tanners. In citing counterparallels, we do not mean to imply that the Book of Mormon was dependent on any of these, although in some cases this is possible. Our purpose in doing so is simply to direct the reader to additional information about which he or she may be unaware and which the Tanners for some reason have chosen to ignore.

Parallels to the Laban Story

The supposed parallels with the apocryphal book of Judith are particularly weak. For example, we see little connection between the phrases “Nephi . . . was favored of the Lord” (Mosiah 10:13) and “she feared God greatly” (Judith 8:8), number 4 in the Tanners’ list (p. 6). Not only are the two ideas unrelated, the passage they cite from the Book of Mormon is not even part of the story from 1 Nephi, but a later reflection by Zeniff. It remains a mystery why they didn’t use 1 Nephi 1:1 (“I, Nephi . . . having been highly favored of the Lord”) or 1 Nephi 3:6 (“thou shalt be favored of the Lord”).

The story of Nephi’s finding and slaying of Laban (1 Nephi 4) has much more in common with that of David and Goliath than that of Judith and Holofernnes, but to cite from 1 Samuel 17 would have detracted from the Tanners’ thesis that Joseph Smith got the idea from the book of Judith. To illustrate these parallels, let’s look at the stories of Nephi and David. Nephi had three older brothers (1 Nephi 2:5); David’s three older brothers had gone to join Saul’s army (1 Samuel 17:13). When Lehi told his sons to go to Laban, all but Nephi murmured (1 Nephi 3:4–6). David’s father sent him to his brothers (1 Samuel 17:17). Nephi told his father, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded” (1 Nephi 3:7); “David said to Saul . . . thy servant will
*go and fight with this Philistine*" (1 Samuel 17:32). Laman, then all the brothers, fled from Laban, the second time hiding from his servants (1 Nephi 3:14, 26–27); the Israelites fled from Goliath "and were sore afraid" (1 Samuel 17:24). In addition to his fifty servants, Laban had tens of thousands under his command (1 Nephi 4:1); Goliath was accompanied by a Philistine army (1 Samuel 17:1–2, 19, 21, 23). Laman and Lemuel, Nephi’s elder brethren, were "angry" with Nephi and murmured (1 Nephi 3:28, 31), but Nephi answered them courageously (1 Nephi 4:1–3); the "anger" of David’s older brother was kindled against him and he scolded him (1 Samuel 17:28), but David answered him courageously (1 Samuel 17:29). Nephi left his brothers and went alone to find Laban (1 Nephi 4:5); David left his brothers and the other Israelite soldiers to go meet Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40–44). Nephi found Laban, who "had fallen to the earth" (1 Nephi 4:7); when struck by David’s sling-stone, Goliath "fell upon his face to the earth" (1 Samuel 17:49). Nephi said that "the Lord had delivered Laban into my hands" (1 Nephi 4:12, 17); David said to Goliath, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee" (1 Samuel 17:46; see also 1 Samuel 17:34–37). Nephi approached the fallen Laban, "beheld his sword, and . . . drew it forth from the sheath thereof (1 Nephi 4:9), then “smote off his head with his own sword” (1 Nephi 4:18); David “ran” to Goliath, “took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith” (1 Samuel 17:51). Nephi wrote, “After I had smitten off his head with his own sword, I . . . did gird on his armor about my loins” (1 Nephi 4:19, 21); David tried on Saul’s armor and sword (1 Samuel 17:38–39) and later stripped Goliath and kept his armor (1 Samuel 17:54; Goliath’s armor is described in 1 Samuel 17:5–6). When Nephi’s brothers saw him dressed in Laban’s armor, they were “exceedingly frightened . . . and they fled from before my presence; for they supposed it was Laban, and that he had slain me” (1 Nephi 4:28); “and when the Philistines saw their champion [Goliath] was dead, they fled” (1 Samuel 17:51). Laban’s servant tried to flee, but Nephi, though young was “a man large in stature, and also having received much strength of the Lord” (1 Nephi 4:31; cf. 2:16); Saul told David, "thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth"
(1 Samuel 17:33). Nephi promised the servant that if he accompanied them "he should be a free man like unto us" (1 Nephi 4:33); Saul promised to whoever would slay Goliath that he would "make his father’s house free in Israel" (1 Samuel 17:25).

The following chart contrasts the events and characters in the Book of Mormon story of Nephi and Laban with that of Judith and Holofernes in the Apocrypha (which the Tanners see as the source of the Laban account) and lists similar events in the biblical stories of Deborah’s battle with Sisera (Judges 4–5) and David’s combat with Goliath (1 Samuel 17). The listing shows that the Tanners’ parallels are not significant enough or unique enough to establish that Joseph Smith plagiarized the book of Judith.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallel</th>
<th>1 Nephi</th>
<th>Judges</th>
<th>1 Samuel</th>
<th>Apocrypha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laban</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>None, but name Laban 55 times in OT</td>
<td></td>
<td>Judith 8:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devout servant of God</td>
<td>(Mos. 10:13)</td>
<td>5:24; common OT theme</td>
<td>13:14; 16:22</td>
<td>Judith 8:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicked men seek to destroy God’s people</td>
<td>Servants (3:25)</td>
<td>Army (4:13)</td>
<td>Army (17:1)</td>
<td>Army (Judith 7:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People fear</td>
<td>3:31</td>
<td>4:6–7, 14; see Joshua 1:9</td>
<td>17:24–37</td>
<td>Judith 7:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel to be strong</td>
<td>4:2</td>
<td>4:6–7, 14; see Joshua 1:9</td>
<td>17:24–37</td>
<td>Counsel to set an example (Judith 8:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s strength not in numbers</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>7:2–8</td>
<td>17:47 (17:42–47; see 14:6)</td>
<td>Judith 9:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel</td>
<td>1 Nephi</td>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>1 Samuel</td>
<td>Apocrypha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemy delivered into hands of God’s servant</td>
<td>4:11–12</td>
<td>5:27; 4:18–21</td>
<td>17:49</td>
<td>Judith 13:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero takes sword (4:9)</td>
<td>hammer and nail (4:21)</td>
<td>sword (17:51).</td>
<td>fauchion (Judith 13:6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero takes hold of enemy’s weapon</td>
<td>4:18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Judith 13:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero takes enemy by the hair</td>
<td>4:18</td>
<td>5:26</td>
<td>17:51</td>
<td>Judith 13:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero beheads enemy with his own weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Judith 13:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnt offerings</td>
<td>5:9</td>
<td>None, but see 6:26</td>
<td>None, but see 11:15; 13:9, 12</td>
<td>Judith 16:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel</td>
<td>1 Nephi</td>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>1 Samuel</td>
<td>Apocrypha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ten thousand&quot;</td>
<td>4:1</td>
<td>4:6, 14; cf. Deut. 32:30; 33:2</td>
<td>18:7</td>
<td>Judith 16:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised in a house then lived in a tent</td>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>cf. Jer. 35:7; 2 Sam. 7:6; 11:11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Judith 8:4–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of apparel</td>
<td>4:19</td>
<td></td>
<td>cf. 17:38–39; see also 18:4</td>
<td>Judith 10:2–3, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemy slain at night</td>
<td>In the street (4:5)</td>
<td>In the tent (4:18–21; 5:25–27)</td>
<td></td>
<td>In the tent Judith 13:1–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left gold and silver, and all manner of riches</td>
<td>3:16</td>
<td>None, but cf. Josh. 6:23–24</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Inherited” wealth (Judith 8:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The words &quot;treasury, tables of brass, and commanded&quot;</td>
<td>4:20, 24</td>
<td>None, but cf. Josh. 6:19, 24; Jer. 38:11</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Mac. 14:48–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People travel to Jerusalem to plunder the temple treasury</td>
<td>To obtain plates, not loot treasury (4:14–17)</td>
<td>None, but cf. 2 Kgs. 18:13–16</td>
<td>cf. 21:8–9</td>
<td>To loot temple money in Jerusalem (2 Mac. 3:7–9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemy brought to the ground</td>
<td>Fallen drunk (4:7–8)</td>
<td>5:27; see also 2 Kgs. 19:35–37</td>
<td>17:49</td>
<td>2 Mac. 3:27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parallels with 2 Esdras

Citing a parallel from B. H. Roberts, the Tanners (p. 11) note that 2 Esdras speaks of the lost tribes traveling to a northern location “where never mankind dwell” (2 Esdras 13:41). They compare this to a phrase from Moroni’s abridgment of Ether in which Jared’s people traveled through a wilderness “where there never had man been” (Ether 2:5). The Tanners describe this as “a remarkable discovery” (p. 11), yet Jeremiah uses similar language when he describes the Israelites traveling “through the wilderness” in a land “where no man dwell” (Jeremiah 2:6). The Tanners note that the phrase sawest thou in 2 Esdras 13:47 also occurs in the Book of Mormon (Ether 3:9), but this exact phrase is found in Genesis 20:10 and 1 Samuel 28:13. The Tanners acknowledge this (p. 12), but cite the parallel anyway, making one wonder how this example demonstrates borrowing from the Apocrypha.

The Tanners (p. 12) cite a passage from the Apocrypha which states that no one can know things which “are in the deep of the sea” (2 Esdras 13:52). They compare this with Mormon’s statement that the bodies of Lamanite fatalities “are in the depths of the sea” (Alma 3:3). Even though Esdras uses deep and the Alma passage uses depths the Tanners claim that “there is no strong parallel to this in the Bible” (p. 12). This claim simply isn’t true. God made a path through “the depths of the sea” when he delivered Israel from Egypt (Isaiah 51:10) and in the last days he will bring his people “from the depths of the sea” (Psalms 68:22). Depths are certainly closer than the deep. More significantly, Micah states, “thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19). We remember that the Lamanite bodies are in the depths of the sea because they were “cast into” the waters of the river Sidon (Alma 3:3). Clearly the Micah passage is closer to the Book of Mormon than 2 Esdras.

The Tanners note (p. 12) that the two-word phrase thee mighty occurs only in the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon. In the latter, the Lord says that he will “declare unto thee mighty and wondrous things” (2 Esdras 13:56). They compare this passage with the Lord’s statement to Nephi, “I will make thee mighty in word and in deed” (Helaman 10:5). Why the Tanners consider
the words *thee mighty* to be more significant than the words *make* and *mighty*, which occur in Psalms 106:8 and Helaman 10:5—but not in 2 Esdras—is a mystery. The Psalms passage also speaks of God's "power" (Psalms 106:8), just as God gives Nephi great "power" as well (Helaman 10:6). The 2 Esdras passage is much closer to material found in the Old Testament (Psalms 71:17; 75:1; 86:10; 119:27; 145:4).

The Tanners correctly note (p. 12) that the four-word phrase *and now when they* occurs together only in the Apocrypha (2 Esdras 13:46) and the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 16:32); however, the phrases *and now when* (Genesis 30:30) and *now when they* (Daniel 11:34; Matthew 28:11; Acts 2:37; 4:13; 16:6; 17:1) are found in the Bible. But is this the kind of material that a forger really looks for?

The Tanners also note (p. 12) that the three words *defend his people* occur only in 2 Esdras 13:49 and Alma 48:13, but how significant is this, given the fact that God's defense and deliverance of his people is such a common theme in the Bible? The Tanners correctly note (p. 12) that the two words *diligence unto* occur in both the Apocrypha (2 Esdras 13:54) and the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 29:4), but not in the Bible. However, since diligence is a common idea in the Bible (38 times in the Old Testament), this is hardly significant.

Phrases such as *diligence unto, thee mighty, as they that are, and now when they, said unto me, and I saw, and whom thou seest* are not exactly golden nuggets of insight. Yet the Tanners apparently view such examples as evidence that Joseph Smith used the Apocrypha. So it would seem, for they write, "It is difficult for us to believe that all of these parallels to the Book of Mormon could have occurred by accident when the same wording falls within just 14 verses of the Apocryphal book of 2 Esdras" (p. 12). But the nine parallels suggested by the Tanners are scattered over ten distinct passages in five Book of Mormon books (Ether 2:5; Alma 50:34; Mormon 2:29; 1 Nephi 16:32; Ether 3:9; Alma 14:7; 48:13; 3:3; 2 Nephi 29:4; and Helaman 10:5). It is a strange method of plagiarism that causes Joseph Smith to search the Bible, including the Apocrypha, for insignificant phrases to create a book of 588 pages.
The Tanners note six parallels between 2 Esdras and the Book of Mormon account of the brother of Jared (pp. 12–13). Their argument here is weakened by the fact that many of these ideas are common and can be found for the most part in the Bible.

1. Both Esdras and the brother of Jared were mighty prophets who diligently prayed and received visions from the Lord. But as the Old Testament makes quite clear, this is exactly the kind of thing that happens to prophets. In fact, this is one of the main reasons they are prophets. They testify about the things they have seen and heard from God.

2. Both Esdras and the brother of Jared go up a mountain. Anciently, mountains were considered a place for revelation, and such prophets as Moses, Elijah, and Ezekiel went to mountaintops to converse with the Lord. Aside from references to this in the Bible, there is a vast literature on the subject, showing that the idea was so common as to have been almost taken for granted.

3. Both men were shown innumerable multitudes of people and things that would happen in the last times. Other prophets, such as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, foresaw what would happen to Israel after their death. The apostle John the Revelator saw innumerable multitudes of people and many things that will happen in the last days. This is what prophets do.

4. Both men saw Jesus long before he came into the world. But Jesus declared that Abraham had seen his day (John 8:56). Others prophets saw him, too. After all, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

5. Both men are commanded to write the revelations they receive. Had the prophets not recorded their revelations, we would not have a Bible. Again, this is something prophets are expected to do.

6. Both men were warned not to reveal certain things they had written. From the Bible, it is obvious that God not only reveals secrets to the prophets (Amos 3:7), but sometimes places limitations on what they could reveal to others. God told Daniel to “shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). Jesus told Peter, James, and John not to reveal the things they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration until after he had risen from the dead (Matthew 17:9). Paul speaks of certain things “not lawful for a man to utter” that he was shown in vision
(2 Corinthians 12:2-4). John "was about to write" things he had heard during his revelation and "heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not" (Revelation 10:4).

**Parallels with 2 Maccabees**

The Tanners believe that it is "significant that the very first verse found in 2 Maccabees mentions the Jews in Egypt, and that the second verse in the Book of Mormon speaks 'of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians'" (p. 3). But "the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt" are mentioned in Jeremiah 44:1. Significantly, Jeremiah was a contemporary of Lehi and Nephi, whose story is told in 1 Nephi 5:13 and 7:14; consequently, we should expect the two books to reflect the culture and history of the time.

The Tanners (pp. 2-3) compare the wording of 1 Nephi 1:6 ("as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock") with that in 2 Maccabees 2:10 ("as when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire came down"). They then note that their "computer research of the Bible does not reveal any wording that is as close to this portion of the Book of Mormon as the Apocrypha" (p. 3). They evidently did not take note of 2 Chronicles 7:1, which says that "when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven." Or what about Elijah, who built an altar of stones and offered prayer, whereupon "the fire of the Lord fell" (1 Kings 18:30-38)? Rocks or stones and divine fire are also found together in Judges 6:21 and Ezekiel 28:14, 16.

The Tanners believe that the words in the records (1 Nephi 13:41, mistakenly listed as verse 40 by the Tanners) were taken by Joseph Smith from the same "three-word parallel" in 2 Maccabees 2:1, which "is never found in the Old or New Testament of the King James Bible" (p. 3). There is only one significant word in the passage, records, preceded by a common preposition in and the even more common definite article the. The parallel is weak indeed, especially when one considers that the Bible refers to records in several passages. Note the roll (scroll) record of Ezra 6:2 and "the book of records" of Esther 6:1. In Ezra
4:15, which postdates Lehi, we find two occurrences of the words *in the book of the records of thy fathers*, which not only contain the three magical words, but also remind us of the wording of 1 Nephi 1:2 (cf. 3:3, 12, 19; 5:16) and closely parallel the wording (twice) in 1 Nephi 1:17; 19:1–2, *the record of my father* (cf. 1 Nephi 6:1; Mosiah 1:6). Moreover, we find the word *record* or *records* 27 times in the book of Mosiah, which the Tanners acknowledge to have been produced by Joseph Smith before 1 Nephi.30 If the prophet was influenced by the passage in the Apocrypha in 1 Nephi 13:41, how does one explain the use of the word in earlier passages he dictated that have no tie to 1 Nephi? Indeed, the word *record* or *records* is found eleven times in 1 Nephi *before* the passage the Tanners believe Joseph Smith took from the Apocrypha (1 Nephi 3:19, 24).

The same thing could be said about the Tanners’ assertion that Joseph Smith picked up the wording *make an abridgment* and *abridged* in 1 Nephi 1:17 from 2 Maccabees 2:23, 26, 28, 31. Since the word *abridgment* is found in Mormon 5:9, which the Tanners believe was dictated by Joseph Smith before 1 Nephi, it is clear that Joseph Smith didn’t need to borrow from the Apocrypha when dictating 1 Nephi.

The Tanners believe that the story of Nephi obtaining the plates of brass from the “treasury of Laban” (1 Nephi 4:20) was taken from an account in 2 Maccabees 3:27, in which a certain Heliodorus tried to plunder the temple treasury but “fell suddenly unto the ground,” just as Laban had “fallen to the earth,” where Nephi found him (1 Nephi 4:7). To this they add that “in both cases God was responsible for their fall” (p. 4). In reality, the Book of Mormon states that Laban had fallen to the ground because “he was drunken with wine.”31 The Tanners’ conclusion that “there are enough similarities between the two stories to make one believe that Joseph Smith was borrowing from the

30 The Tanners’ support for the primacy of Mosiah is evidenced in their *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990), 32–37.

31 It is true that the text also says that the Lord had delivered Laban into Nephi’s hands (1 Nephi 4:11), but this may refer to the fact that the Lord guided Nephi to where Laban had fallen (1 Nephi 4:6), not that the Lord had caused Laban to fall.
Apocrypha” (p. 4) is unwarranted, for the stories are far more
different than similar. Heliodorus was under orders to rob the
temple treasury to bring it to his sovereign (2 Maccabees 3:1–14,
23), while Nephi came in search of the brass plates kept in a
private treasury, “not knowing beforehand the things which I
should do” (1 Nephi 4:6). Nephi came alone in stealth by night
(1 Nephi 4:5), but Heliodorus came openly with his guards (2
Maccabees 3:24). The appearance of the angelic horseman to stop
Heliodorus (2 Maccabees 3:25–27) is totally foreign to the Book
of Mormon story. Nephi, of course, succeeded, while Heliodorus
did not. But the most significant difference is the nature of the
“treasury.” The temple treasury contained money, while Laban’s
treasury contained a record written on brass plates. Only once in
the Bible, in Ezra 5:17–6:2, do we find that a “treasure house”
contained written records. Significantly, the Aramaic word used
for treasure in this passage is ginzayāḏ, from the root meaning
“to keep, hide” in both Hebrew and Aramaic.32 From the same
root is the Mishnaic Hebrew ǧnîzâḥ, which denotes a repository
for worn synagogue scrolls,33 and ǧnnâz, “archivist” or one in
charge of records. The very fact that Joseph Smith, unacquainted
as he was with things Jewish, used the term treasury for a place
where records are stored is evidence of his prophetic calling. In
the collection of Jewish traditions known as The Book of Jasher,
we find reference to writings kept in a treasury: “And in those
days Cainan wrote upon tablets of stone, what was to take place in
time to come, and he put them in his treasuries” (Jasher 2:13).
William J. Hamblin, citing Plutarch, noted that “a ‘golden book’
... containing the poetry of Aristomache of Erythrae, was depos­
ited in the Treasury of the Sicyonians at Delphi.”34 This is an­
other example in which the Tanners, guided by their preconceived
notion of Joseph Smith as a charlatan and unacquainted with the

32 In Esther 3:9; 4:7, the Hebrew word of the same origin is used to denote
a treasury where money is kept.
33 For this practice, which continues in Judaism today, see Mishnah
34 Plutarch, Moralia, “Quaestiones Convivales,” V, 2, 675B = Loeb
8:387, cited in William J. Hamblin, “Sacred Writings on Bronze Plates in the
ancient Near East, simply cannot go beyond a surface analysis to discover what really lies behind the Book of Mormon text.

Had the Tanners searched more diligently, they would have noted that expressions found in the story of Nephi’s encounter with Laban have parallels in later parts of the Book of Mormon, indicating that Joseph Smith had already dictated them and had no need to rediscover them in the Apocrypha. Thus, for example, when “Laban was angry” with Laman “and thrust him out from his presence; and he would not that he should have the records,” he threatened to slay him, and Laman fled (1 Nephi 3:13–14). When Laman returned with his brothers to purchase the plates with the wealth their father had left behind, Laban again “thrust [them] out” and sought to slay them (1 Nephi 3:25). But they fled and “hid [them]selves in the cavity of a rock” (1 Nephi 3:27). Subsequently, Nephi returned to the city “by night” (1 Nephi 4:5) and found the unconscious Laban (1 Nephi 4:7–8), who “had been out by night” (1 Nephi 4:22). Some of the same terminology is found in the story of Ether, whom the people “esteemed... as naught, and cast him out; and he hid himself in the cavity of a rock by day, and by night he went forth” (Ether 13:13). Of special interest is that “as he dwelt in the cavity of a rock he made the remainder of this record,” going out from time to time “by night” to see the doings of the people (Ether 13:14). Also from the book of Ether is the story of “the sons of Shule [who] crept into the house of Noah by night and slew him” (Ether 7:18). The wording is similar to that of 1 Nephi 4:5, in which we read that Nephi “by night... crept into the city and went forth towards the house of Laban,” whom he slew.

Another close parallel with the story of Nephi and his brothers and their encounter with Laban is found in Alma 51. Just as Nephi and his brothers had brought their “tents” with them to Jerusalem (1 Nephi 3:9), “Teancum and his men did pitch their tents in the borders of the land Bountiful; and Amalickiah did pitch his tents in the borders on the beach by the seashore” (Alma 51:32). “And it came to pass that when the night had come, Teancum and his servant stole forth and went out by night, and went into the camp of Amalickiah; and behold, sleep had overpowered them. ... Teancum stole privily into the tent of the king, and put a javelin to his heart; and he did cause the death of the king
immediately that he did not awake his servants (Alma 51:33–34). The stealthy manner in which Teancum went into the Lamanite camp by night and slew the unconscious Amalickiah is very similar to the story of Nephi and Laban in 1Nephi 4. The Teancum account even makes mention of Amalickiah’s “servants,” just as 1Nephi 3:25–27 mentions the “servants of Laban.” Of interest, too, is the fact that Teancum “went out by night” with “his servant,” while in 1Nephi 4:20–36 we read that Nephi encountered “the servant of Laban” (verse 20), who thought that he was Laban, who “had been out by night” (verse 22), and the two of them took the brass plates “without the walls” of the city (verse 24). With such rich parallels as these in portions of the Book of Mormon that had already been dictated by Joseph Smith, why would he need the Apocrypha when he came to 1Nephi?

Furthermore, there are close parallels to the story of Nephi and Laban in the Old Testament. We have, for example, the story of the Israeliite spies who came into the city of Jericho by night (Joshua 2:2) and were hidden by Rahab (Joshua 2:4; 6:25), just as Nephi hid his brothers outside the wall of Jerusalem before going toward Laban’s house (1Nephi 4:5). Like Jerusalem, Jericho, too, had a wall (most renowned for its fall in Joshua 6:20), for Rahab’s house was built atop the wall (Joshua 2:15). It also had a gate that was shut at night (Joshua 2:5, 7). Rahab told the men of the town that the spies had left before the gate was closed and recommended that they “pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them” (Joshua 2:5). “And the men pursued after them,” (Joshua 2:7) “but found them not,” for they hid themselves in the mountain (Joshua 2:16, 22). Similarly, when Lehi’s sons ran from Laban, they “fled into the wilderness, and the servants of Laban did not overtake [them], and [they] hid [them]selves in the cavity of a rock” (1Nephi 3:27). During their stay at her house, Rahab “said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land” (Joshua 2:9). Nephi, as he stood contemplating the Spirit’s command to slay Laban, reflected on “the land of promise” (1Nephi 4:14). And just as Nephi had reminded his brothers of how “Moses . . . spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through, out of captivity, on dry ground” (1Nephi 4:2), Rahab told the Israeliite
spies, "we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you" (Joshua 2:10). She knew that, with the Lord's help, the Israelites could readily defeat her people, so she pled that they might "deliver" her and her family "from death" (Joshua 2:13). Similarly, Nephi had followed up his comments about the Red Sea by assuring his brothers that "the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 4:3). The spies, upon their return to the Israelite camp, "said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land" (Joshua 2:24), paralleled by the statement that "the Lord hath delivered him [Laban] into thy [Nephi's] hands" (1 Nephi 4:11; 3:29).

There are other similarities between the two stories. For example, just as Nephi told Laban's servant "with an oath" that, if he would accompany them, they "would spare his life" (1 Nephi 4:32–33), the two spies swore an "oath" to save Rahab's family from destruction (Joshua 2:14, 17, 20, 22). When, at length, the Israelites attacked Jericho, Rahab's family was spared "because she hid the messengers" (Joshua 6:17). But "the city shall be accursed" (Joshua 6:17) and was destroyed (Joshua 6:24), just as, in Lehi's prophecy, "Jerusalem . . . should be destroyed" (1 Nephi 1:13). Two verses later in the Joshua account, we read of "all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron" of Jericho that should be "put into the treasury of the Lord" (Joshua 6:19, 24). These remind us of the "gold . . . silver, and . . . precious things" left behind by Lehi (1 Nephi 2:4), which his sons tried to exchange for the "plates of brass" in Laban's possession (1 Nephi 3:22–25) and of the "treasury" in which Laban kept the plates (1 Nephi 4:20). Finally, just as Nephi slew Laban "with his own sword" (1 Nephi 4:18), the Israelites destroyed the inhabitants of Jericho "with the edge of the sword" (Joshua 6:21).

Another Old Testament story that has parallels to the events in 1 Nephi 3–4 is found in Nehemiah 2. Nehemiah recorded, "So I came to Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 2:11) in wording similar to 1 Nephi 3:9 ("I, Nephi, and my brethren took our journey . . . to go up to the land of Jerusalem"), 1 Nephi 3:10 ("we had gone up to the land of Jerusalem"), and 1 Nephi 4:1 ("let us go up again unto Jerusalem"; cf. 4:4). Like Nephi, who went "by night" toward Laban’s house (1 Nephi 4:5), Nehemiah went "in
the night” (Nehemiah 2:12, 15) or “by night” (Nehemiah 2:13) to do “what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:12). We are reminded that Lehi’s sons had returned to Jerusalem because “the Lord had commanded” their father Lehi (1 Nephi 3:2, 4–5).

Nehemiah took with him “some few men,” and “went out by night by the gate” to inspect “the walls of Jerusalem” and its gates (Nehemiah 2:12–13). Nephi’s brothers, also few (three) in number, “did follow [him] until [they] came without the walls of Jerusalem,” where he “caused that they should hide themselves without the walls” (1 Nephi 4:4–5). Then Nephi “crept into the city . . . not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do” (1 Nephi 4:5–6). Similarly, after inspecting the wall, Nehemiah “returned” inside the city (Nehemiah 2:15; cf. 1 Nephi 4:1, “Let us go up again unto Jerusalem”), ensuring that “the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did” (Nehemiah 2:16). While this parallels Nephi’s not knowing what he would do, it also parallels his statement that they took Laban’s servant with them so “that the Jews might not know concerning our flight into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 4:36). We can also compare this with Nehemiah’s statement, “neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work” (Nehemiah 2:16).

Nehemiah’s purpose was to inspect the walls and gates of the city, with a view to rebuilding them, for “Jerusalem lieth waste” (Nehemiah 2:17). This destruction was the result of the Babylonian attack that Lehi had predicted (1 Nephi 1:4, 13; 2:13; 10:3).

**Parallels from Sources Unavailable to Joseph Smith**

As we examined the Tanners’ parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Apocrypha, we were struck by the fact that there are often closer parallels with Old Testament materials. For example, 1 Nephi’s closest parallels are found in the book of Jeremiah. Since Jeremiah was a contemporary of Nephi, we should expect a large number of parallels of both language and themes in their writings. Indeed, scholars have already noted parallels between Jeremiah’s writings and the contemporary Hebrew letters discovered at Lachish, south of Jerusalem, in the 1930s.
Also interesting—but less explainable from the Tanners’ viewpoint—are the close parallels between the Book of Mormon and ancient extracanonical works that were not available until many decades after Joseph Smith’s death. For purposes of illustration, we shall examine three of these works here. They are *4 Baruch*, the *Pistis Sophia*, and the *Cologne Mani Codex*.

**Parallels with 4 Baruch**

The text denominated *4 Baruch* or “Things omitted from Jeremiah the prophet,” known from ancient Greek, Ethiopian, Armenian, Old Slavonic, and Romanian versions, was first made available in English in 1889. For the purpose of comparing it with 1 Nephi, we use a recent translation by S. E. Robinson.

The story begins at the time “when the children of Israel were taken captive by the king of the Chaldeans”—the same captivity from which Lehi was escaping. The Lord told Jeremiah to “rise up and get out of this city . . . because I am going to destroy it for the multitude of the sins of those who inhabit it” (*4 Baruch* 1:1; cf. 4:7). The Lord had warned Lehi that Jerusalem would be “destroyed” (*1 Nephi* 1:4, 13; 2:13; 10:3) and “the Lord commanded [Lehi] . . . that he should take his family and depart” (*1 Nephi* 2:2). The wording of the *4 Baruch* passage is very similar to that of *1 Nephi* 3:17: “For he knew that Jerusalem must be destroyed, because of the wickedness of the people.” Immediately after learning that “Jerusalem must be destroyed . . . Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord . . . in behalf of his people” (*1 Nephi* 1:4–5). Similarly, immediately after the Lord told Jeremiah that he was going to destroy the city, he told him, “your prayers are like a firm pillar in the middle of it, and like an unbreachable wall encircling it” (*4 Baruch* 1:2). That night, Jeremiah went to the temple, determined that he “would pray for the people until the sin was forgiven them” (*4 Baruch* 2:3; cf. 3:4).

Jeremiah told Baruch, “God is delivering the city into the hands of the king of the Chaldeans, to take the people captive into Babylon” (*4 Baruch* 2:7; cf. 3:8). This is like Lehi’s prophecy “concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the

---

inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon” (1 Nephi 1:13).

At one point, we read that some of the exiled Jews “came to a desert place some distance from Jerusalem” (4 Baruch 8:11), just as Lehi and his family left Jerusalem “and departed into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 2:2–4).

The Lord told Jeremiah to rise “at the sixth hour of the night, [and] get up on the wall of the city” (4 Baruch 1:11). This reminds us that “it was by night” that Nephi and his brothers “came without the walls of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 4:4–5). Jeremiah and Baruch “went up together onto the walls of the city” (4 Baruch 3:1), where they saw that “angels came out of heaven holding torches” (4 Baruch 3:2). Lehi, too, had seen “the heavens open” and “angels” (1 Nephi 1:8) and “saw One descending out of the midst of heaven . . . [whose] luster was above that of the sun at noon-day,” followed by twelve other bright individuals (1 Nephi 1:9–10). 4 Baruch 4:4 also mentions “the sun.” Like Lehi, who saw God on his heavenly throne (1 Nephi 1:8), Jeremiah received a visit from God, who then “went up from Jeremiah into heaven” (4 Baruch 3:17).

After the Chaldeans took Jerusalem, Baruch “went outside the city . . . and he remained sitting in a tomb while the angels came to him” (4 Baruch 4:11–12). The story bears some resemblance to that of the sons of Lehi who, when fleeing from Laban’s house in the city of Jerusalem, hid themselves “in the cavity of a rock” and were visited by “an angel of the Lord” (1 Nephi 3:27–29). The tombs of Lehi and Jeremiah’s day were hewn out of bedrock.

Meanwhile, Jeremiah had told Abimelech to leave Jerusalem (4 Baruch 3:12–14, 21), as the Lord had told Lehi to depart. Abimelech sat down to rest and fell into a very deep sleep (4 Baruch 5:2), reminding us that Lehi, after his first vision, “cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit” and “was carried away in a vision” (1 Nephi 1:7–8). After this second vision, Lehi “did exclaim many things unto the Lord . . . in the praising of his God” (1 Nephi 1:14–15). Abimelech, upon awakening, exclaimed, “Blessed (be) the Lord,” adding that “a great stupor has befallen me” (4 Baruch 5:12). After returning to Jerusalem, Abimelech “went outside the city and prayed to the Lord,” whereupon an angel appeared to him (4 Baruch 6:1–2).
After he had rejoined Baruch in the tomb (4 Baruch 6:2), Baruch also prayed and the angel again appeared (4 Baruch 6:15). This is reminiscent of “Lehi, [who] as he went forth prayed unto the Lord . . . and [as] he prayed unto the Lord” a pillar of fire appeared before him (1 Nephi 1:5–6).

In his second vision, Lehi “saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day. And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth” (1 Nephi 1:9–11). In 4 Baruch 9, we read of “Jesus Christ the light of the aeons, the inextinguishable lamp” (4 Baruch 9:14) who, “coming into the world” would “go out and choose for himself twelve apostles” (4 Baruch 9:20). In Lehi’s vision, Christ “gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read” (1 Nephi 1:11). In 4 Baruch 7:16–22, God has an eagle deliver to Jeremiah a letter with instructions to read it. When Lehi told the people about his vision “of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world, . . . the Jews . . . were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away” (1 Nephi 1:19–20; cf. Helaman 8:22). In like manner, “as Jeremiah was saying these things about the Son of God, that he is coming into the world, the people became angry” and recalled that Isaiah had similarly testified that he had seen “the son of God.” “Come, therefore,” they said “and let us not kill him by that (same) death [as Isaiah], but let’s stone him with stones” (4 Baruch 9:21–22). But like Lehi, Jeremiah escaped death for a time by divine intervention (4 Baruch 9:25–29).36

In 4 Baruch 9:1–2, Jeremiah and the people offer sacrifices, just as Lehi offered sacrifices upon the return of his sons from their mission to get Laban’s brass plates (1 Nephi 5:9). As he was praying at the altar, Jeremiah fell as though dead, though he was not dead and rose up after three days (4 Baruch 9:7–14).

36 When the crowd sought to stone him, Jeremiah declared, “they will not kill me until I have described to you everything that I saw.” It was not until after he had delivered his message, when “his stewardship was fulfilled” that they could take his life (4 Baruch 9:24–31). This part of the story resembles that of Abinadi in Mosiah 13:5–9; 17:1; cf. Mosiah 11:26.
story is similar to Lehi’s “cast[ing] himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit” (1 Nephi 1:7), though it is closer to the stories of Alma (Alma 36:10, 16; 38:8) and Lamoni (Alma 18:42–19:8), each of whom lay as though dead for three days and three nights. In the case of Jeremiah, as with Lamoni, there were some who wanted to bury him, but God made it known that this was not to be done.

There are other similarities between 4 Baruch and the story of Lehi, such as his vision of the tree in 1 Nephi 8, but what we have given here is sufficient to show that one can find such parallels in texts that were unknown in Joseph Smith’s day. This being so, there seems to be little, if any, value in the Tanners’ comparison of parts of 1 Nephi with books found in the King James Apocrypha, especially when one notes that the passages in the Apocrypha are more scattered than those in 4 Baruch that we have cited.

**Parallels from the *Pistis Sophia***

The *Pistis Sophia* is thought to have been written in the second or third century A.D. Though the British Museum acquired a manuscript of the Coptic text in 1785, by the time the Book of Mormon appeared it had not yet been translated. The earliest French translation was in 1856. Several pages were translated into English in 1887, but the full text, translated by G. R. S. Mead, did not appear in English until 1896.\(^{37}\)

According to *Pistis Sophia* 3, there was, at the time of Jesus’ ascension into heaven, a great *earthquake* that lasted for *three hours*. An alternate view given in the manuscript is that the earthquake lasted from the third hour on the fifteenth day of the month Tybi until the ninth hour the following day. This accords with the statement in 3 Nephi 8:19 that “the *quakings of the earth . . .* did last for about the space of *three hours*; and it was said by some that the time was greater.”

For three days after the earthquake and other agitations of nature, the Nephites were “howling and weeping” in the darkness and lamenting the destruction of the people in a number of cities (3 Nephi 8:23–25; 10:8). In *Pistis Sophia* 4, we read that “the

\(^{37}\) In this study, we use *Pistis Sophia*, trans. G. R. S. Mead, rev. ed. (1921; reprint London: Watkins, 1955).
disciples sat together in fear and were in exceedingly great agitation and were afraid because of the great earthquake which took place, and they wept together, saying: 'What will then be? Peradventure the Saviour will destroy all regions?' Thus saying, they wept together." During this time, the heavenly host "all sang praises . . . so that the whole world heard their voices" (Pistis Sophia 3). Among the Nephites, after the quaking had stopped, "all the people of the land" heard the voice of Christ (3 Nephi 9:1–10:8).

On the day following the earthquake, according to Pistis Sophia 4, as the disciples "wept together . . . the heavens opened, and they saw Jesus descend, shining most exceedingly . . . so that men in the world cannot describe the light which was on him." Joseph Smith used similar terminology to describe the brilliant light that surrounded the Father and the Son when they appeared to him in the Sacred Grove in the spring of 1820 (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17). We are also reminded of Joseph Smith's description of Moroni on the night of his first appearance, 21/22 September 1823: "his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person" (Joseph Smith—History 1:32). The gradients of light are features shared by both Jesus and Moroni. Of Moroni's departure, Joseph Smith wrote, "I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark, except just around him; when, instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance" (Joseph Smith—History 1:43). In Pistis Sophia 6, the apostles, unable to withstand the brilliant light, asked Jesus, "withdraw thy light-glory into thyself that we may be able to stand. . . . Then Jesus drew to himself the glory of his light." The opening of the heavens and the drawing

38 According to the text, there were three types of light—also called glories—that surrounded Jesus, each more brilliant than the other (Pistis Sophia 4). These remind us of the three degrees of glory, with the terrestrial being more glorious than the telestial and the celestial being more glorious still (D&C 76:70–71, 78, 81, 96–98; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:41).
of the light to the person of the heavenly visitor is a feature shared by both stories.

The Book of Mormon does not say that Jesus was surrounded by light when he descended from heaven to visit the Nephites after his resurrection, but it is significant that he introduced himself by saying “I am Jesus Christ. . . . I am the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 11:10–11). The Book of Mormon text notes that Jesus appeared to the Nephites “after his ascension into heaven” (3 Nephi 11:12), while in Pistoris Sophia 3–4 the reappearance of Christ to his apostles occurred the day following his ascension. The apostles were frightened, so Jesus reassured them by saying, “Take courage. It is I, be not afraid” (Pistoris Sophia 5). To the Nephites, who had fallen “to the earth” (3 Nephi 11:12), he said, “Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet. . . . And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet” (3 Nephi 11:14–15). In Pistoris Sophia 6, “all the disciples took courage, stepped forward to Jesus, fell down all together, adored him, rejoicing in great joy.”

In both stories, Jesus then teaches the people, though the contents of his teachings are not identical. To the Nephites, he delivered the sermon he had previously given to his disciples in the Old World. To the apostles of Pistoris Sophia 6–7, he told of the pre-existent world from which they had come and of his return to his Father after the resurrection to receive his heavenly garment. One passage is of particular importance because it, too, has a parallel in the Book of Mormon. Jesus told the twelve apostles, “when I set out for the world [from the preexistence], I brought from the beginning with me twelve powers, as I have told you from the beginning, which I have taken from the twelve savours of the Treasury of the Light, according to the command of the First Mystery [i.e., God]. These then I cast into the womb of your mothers, when I came into the world, that is those which are in your bodies today” (Pistoris Sophia 7).

This scene is like one from Lehi’s vision, in which “he saw the heavens open, and . . . God sitting upon his throne,” then “he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld
that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day. And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament. And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth” (1 Nephi 1:8–11). The brilliance of Christ and his twelve apostles, as described by Lehi, reminds us that, in the *Pistis Sophia*, they are said to have come forth from “the Treasury of Light.”

Nephi, having asked to see what his father had seen in vision, was also shown Christ and his twelve apostles (1 Nephi 11:27–29). Like Lehi, he “saw the heavens open” and was shown Jesus’ mother Mary, “a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins,” who became “the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh” (1 Nephi 11:14–21). Similarly, in *Pistis Sophia* 8, Jesus, speaking of the preexistence, says, “I looked down on the world of mankind and found Mary, who is called ‘my mother’ according to the body of matter,” into whom his spirit was then placed when the spirits of the apostles were placed inside their mothers.

A number of Latter-day Saint practices and beliefs introduced by Joseph Smith are also found in the *Pistis Sophia*. In one scene (*Pistis Sophia* 136), the apostles and their wives stand around Jesus dressed in linen as he prays for them at the altar, reminiscent of the prayer circle. The words spoken by Jesus are unintelligible and are hence merely transliterated (and not translated) in the English text. This reminds us that, in the Book of Mormon, when Jesus prayed for the Nephites, his words were so great that they could not be recorded (3 Nephi 17:15–17). In *Pistis Sophia* 141–43, as the apostles stand around Jesus with the “cipher” of “the name” in their hands, Jesus tells them about the power he has given them to seal on earth and in heaven, so they can perform the mysteries for men, and mentions anointing and the mystery that leads into the Holy of Holies, in connection with the ciphers and names. In several passages of the *Pistis Sophia* (128, 130, 146–47), Jesus talks about baptism for the dead and indicates that the living must perform for them that which they can no longer do for themselves. Did Joseph Smith get his ideas for the temple from this ancient document that was unknown in his day?

There are other parallels as well. In *Pistis Sophia* 7–8, Jesus speaks of the “soul of the rulers” in the premortal existence, in
terms reminiscent of Abraham 3:23 in which, in the premortal world, God stood among a group of spirits and declared, "These I will make my rulers." The following is an interesting comparison between part of a revelation received by Joseph Smith and a section of the ancient Coptic text:

**D&C 18:15-16**

And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!

**Pistis Sophia 104**

(Mead's translation)

Amen, amen, I say unto you: He who shall keep in Life and save only one soul, besides the dignity which he possesseth in the Light-kingdom, he will receive yet another dignity for the soul which he hath saved, so that he who shall save many souls, besides the dignity which he possesseth in the Light he will receive many other dignities for the souls which he hath saved.

Were we to use the Tanners’ reasoning, we could conclude that Joseph Smith plagiarized the Pistis Sophia which, since it postdates Lehi, clearly makes the Book of Mormon—and some of Joseph Smith’s later revelations—a fraud. But since Joseph did not and could not have possessed a copy of that document, this argument fails. Ironically, the Book of Mormon has better parallels with the Pistis Sophia and other ancient texts than it does with the King James Apocrypha.

**Parallels with the Cologne Mani Codex**

The Cologne Mani Codex is a miniature parchment document from the fifth century A.D. Not opened and rendered readable until 1969, a preliminary survey was published in 1970 and German translations in 1975 and 1978. The first English translation,
which we employ here, was published in 1979. Numbers referenced here are page numbers in that translation. We compare Nephi’s vision with that of Mani.

1 Nephi

For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen... as I sat pondering in mine heart (11:1)

I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord (11:1)

yea, into an exceedingly high mountain (11:1)

And the Spirit said unto me: Behold, what desirest thou? (11:2) [Nephi wants to have the “mysteries of God” revealed to him (10:17, 19)]

The Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all (11:6)

[Nephi beheld many things in a vision (11–14)]

And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me (11:14)

Cologne Mani Codex

I was reflecting about how all the works came to be. As I pondered (43)

The Spirit snatched me up (41)

Suddenly the living [Spirit] snatched me, [lifted me up] with greatest [force] (43)

set me [down] on [the pinnacle] of a [very] high mountain (43)

and carried me off to the mountain in silent power (41)

Now he spoke with me and said: He who is eminently most powerful sent me to you so that I may reveal to you the secrets which you pondered (43)

The living [Spirit]... said to [me: ...] give glory to the greatest King of honor (43)

There many great [visions] were revealed to me (41)

I saw a glorious throne room coming down from the highest height and a mighty angel standing by it (43)

---

1 Nephi

[Nephi beheld many places in his vision (11:13; 12:1; 13:1; 14:11–27), including other angels (11:30)]

[Nephi is questioned by the angel (11:14, 16, 21; 14:8)]

[Nephi is forbidden to write many of the things which he sees since others have and will write them (14:28)]

The things which I have written sufficeth me [He writes only what the angel tells him he can write] (14:28)

[Lehi’s family has “plates of brass” (13:23). Nephi makes plates of ore (19:1–6). The Lord commands him to make another set of metal plates later in 2 Nephi 5:30]

These things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb (13:35).

[Records similar to Nephi’s are “sealed up to come forth” in a latter time (14:26)]

[The Nephites] shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious (13:35)

[John sees “many things” which Nephi has seen, but Nephi only wrote “but a small part” of the things he saw (14:24, 28)]

These plates should be handed down from one generation to another (19:4)

Cologne Mani Codex

[to the] north and I beheld there enormous mountains and angels and many places (43)

He beheld everything and carefully questioned the angels (47)

Now all these things that are hidden, write (43)

And whatever they said to him, he would inscribe in his writings (47)

Write upon bronze tablets (43)

And store them up in the desert land (43)

All that you write, write most clearly (43)

[Now many other things] like these are in his writings, which tell about his rapture and revelation (43)

For all which he heard and saw he wrote down and bequeathed to all posterity of the Spirit of Truth (43)
[Following his vision Nephi is left weak from the experience and sorrows over his brothers’ unbelief (15:1–6)]

My heart became heavy, all my limbs trembled, my backbone was shaken violently, and my feet did not stand on their pins (41)

As with 4 Baruch and the Pistis Sophia, the Cologne Mani Codex was unavailable to Joseph Smith or anyone else of his time. The close conceptual parallels between these documents and the Book of Mormon answer the Tanners’ assertion that “it will be very difficult for Mormon scholars to explain this extraordinary cluster of similarities [with the Apocrypha]. It seems obvious that the only answer to these remarkable parallels is that Joseph Smith borrowed from the Apocrypha in creating his Book of Mormon” (p. 8). If we can find closer parallels with documents that Joseph Smith could not have borrowed from, the tenuous ties that the Tanners make between the Nephite record and the Apocrypha evaporate as evidence for their theory of direct borrowing from the Apocrypha and demonstrate the faulty and arbitrary nature of their methodology.

Parallels with the Tree of Life Visions

The Tanners claim that Lehi’s vision of the tree of life was crafted from phrases found in the book of Revelation and parts of 2 Esdras (pp. 13–14). God promised the faithful at Ephesus that they would be permitted to “eat of the tree of life” (Revelation 2:7) and rule the nations with “a rod of iron” (Revelation 2:27). In vision John saw “a pure river of water of life,” which proceeded from the throne of God, and also “the tree of life,” which bore twelve kinds of “fruits” (Revelation 22:1–3). Thus John describes a “tree” or the “tree of life” that has “fruit” which is eaten by the righteous and is also near “a pure river of water” (i.e., waters of life). The Tanners equate these elements with ideas found in the Book of Mormon in which the “tree of life” and its “fruit” are also described in connection with “a river of water” (1 Nephi 8:13, 26). According to the Tanners, passages such as these constitute “irrefutable evidence” that Joseph Smith “plagiarized” from Revelation (p. 13). The Tanners appear to be unaware that the symbols discussed by John in Revelation were
not unique, but were the common property of the ancient Near East. As one authority notes, the tree of life mythology is “a primal image which can be glimpsed as early as the third millennium B.C.”\(^{40}\) In one significant study, Widengren contrasts Mesopotamian tree of life imagery with that of Israel. After noting that these elements are “bound up with the oldest strata of Sumerian culture and religion,” he states:

All interest centres around the holy garden of the divinity. In this garden is found the Tree of Life, the fruits of which are *eaten* by man while its oil is used for the anointment of his body and especially his head. There the Water of Life is streaming from beneath the roots of this tree. Further we note the crown twined from the shoots of the tree, from its leaves and flowers, the branch cut from the trunk of the tree, a *rod* acting both as a sign of dignity and as an instrument for magical-medical purifications, the water drawn from the well with the Water of Life, serving for medical-religious purifications.\(^{41}\)

Even the casual reader of Revelation will recognize these patterns in John’s vision: the “tree of life,” the “water of life,” the “leaves” which are “for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1–2). Earlier, evoking the description of the Psalmist (Psalms 2:9), Revelation mentions the “rod of iron” with which Christ and the faithful will rule the nations (Revelation 2:27). Obviously, when John describes his vision of the tree of life he is simply adopting the language and terminology of the ancient Near Eastern world in depicting what he saw. These ideas were well known to the world from which Lehi came, and it would have been as easy for Lehi to have used these themes as it was for John seven centuries later. Therefore, to claim that the parallels between the Book of Mormon, Revelation, and the Apocrypha constitute “irrefutable evidence” of plagiarism is absurd. Where the Tanners’ argument really breaks down, however, is when they fail


\(^{41}\) Geo Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Uppsala: Lundequist, 1951), 59, emphasis added.
to examine other elements found in the Book of Mormon, but not found in the Bible or the Apocrypha. The Book of Mormon does not merely use certain symbols and themes used by John, but it also portrays additional elements found in other Near Eastern documents that were unavailable to Joseph Smith at the time the Book of Mormon was published.

While both the Book of Mormon and Revelation mention fruit, in John's vision there are "twelve manner of fruits" on the tree John saw (Revelation 22:2). Lehi describes only one kind of fruit (1 Nephi 8:11-12). John speaks of the leaves of the tree that will heal the nations (Revelation 22:2), while the Book of Mormon says nothing about leaves on the tree. The Book of Mormon describes people partaking of the fruit. Some people fall away after partaking, while others do not (1 Nephi 8:24-34). There is none of this in Revelation. According to Lehi the tree's beauty exceeds that of anything else (1 Nephi 8:11-12, 15; 11:8), the fruit is "sweet" (1 Nephi 8:11) and fills people with "joy" (1 Nephi 8:12) and happiness (1 Nephi 8:10). While Revelation alludes to the fruits and the positive effect of the tree's leaves, it fails to describe its taste and other attributes mentioned by Lehi and Nephi (Revelation 22:2). Moreover, Revelation tells us nothing about the color of the tree or its fruit. In the visions of Lehi and Nephi, however, we are clearly told that both the fruit and the tree itself are white (1 Nephi 8:11; 11:8). The golden candlestick of the Tabernacle and temple is believed to have been made in the shape of an almond tree and the almond tree itself was considered a representation of the tree of life.42

The almond is the first tree of spring in the Near East, sometimes wakening as early as mid-December, when it decks itself in radiant white—at bottom pinky—blossoms even before leafing, besides being "the last to shed its leaves." In short, an ideal image of life, resurrection and "White Goddess," whose fruit—in itself a delicacy and early appreciated for its medical and cosmetic properties—has been described as "perfect." For as we read in an antique source, the seed and edible part, unlike most other fruits, are identical, both "a

42 Yarden, The Tree of Light, 46.
beginning and an end; a beginning in that it springs from no other power than itself, an end in that it is the aspiration of life which follows nature.”

A document found at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, declares, “Now the color of the tree of life is like the sun. And its branches are beautiful. Its leaves are like those of the cypress [a white tree]. Its fruit is like a bunch of grapes when it is white.”

Rivers of Water

John speaks of a river of pure water representing the waters of life (Revelation 22:1). Lehi’s dream, however, has two fountains. The fountain of living waters, whose source is at or near the tree (1 Nephi 11:25), and the “river” or “fountain” of filthy water, whose worldly source is at the opposite end of the path and the iron rod (1 Nephi 8:20; 12:16; 15:26–29). John speaks only of one river, the “living fountains of waters” (Revelation 7:17) or the “pure river of water of life” (Revelation 22:1), while the Book of Mormon mentions two. As Wilfred Griggs showed years ago, this concept of two rivers, one good and one bad, being near the tree of life is found in the religious literature of the ancient Mediterranean world and dates to the time of Lehi.

Similar elements are reflected in later pseudepigraphic works. First Enoch describes the waters of life in these terms: “And in that place I saw the fountain of righteousness Which was inexhaustible: And all around it were many fountains of wisdom; And all the thirsty drank of them, And were filled with wisdom, And their dwellings were with the righteous and holy and elect.”

There are other waters, however: “Woe to you who drink water from every fountain, For suddenly shall ye be consumed and

43 Ibid., emphasis added.
withered away, Because ye have forsaken the fountain of life.”47 The Thanksgiving Hymns found with the Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the “torrents of Death” or the “rivers of Belial,” which “burst their high banks” and “cast up mire in abundance.”48 Likewise, the Book of Mormon describes the river as one of “filthy water” (1 Nephi 12:16) or “filthiness” (1 Nephi 15:27), in which depths “many were drowned” (1 Nephi 8:32). Nephi says that the river of filthy water “was a representation of that awful hell, which the angel said unto me was prepared for the wicked” (1 Nephi 15:29). In similar terms, the Thanksgiving Hymns describe “the floods of Belial,” which “burst forth unto hell itself,” sweeping men away.49 This is completely different from the “pure river of water of life” described in John’s vision (Revelation 22:1).

The Great and Spacious Building

Unable to find parallels between Lehi’s “great and spacious building” and the book of Revelation, the Tanners appeal to the Apocrypha. They note that Lehi’s building was “as it were in the air” (1 Nephi 8:26), which they compare to a passage from Esdras, in which the prophet is told “to go into the field, where no foundation of any building was” (2 Esdras 10:53). Esdras is shown “the beauty and greatness of the building” (2 Esdras 10:55). In light of this, the Tanners argue, “The Book of Mormon uses the word ‘great’ in referring to the building, and the Apocrypha speaks of the ‘greatness’ of the building” (p. 13). The building in Esdras, however, is the heavenly Jerusalem. By way of contrast, Lehi and Nephi portray the great and spacious building in an extremely negative light, not as the New Jerusalem, but as Babylon or the “great and abominable church,” which they describe in similar terms (compare 1 Nephi 11:36 with 1 Nephi 22:14; 2 Nephi 28:18). For Lehi and Nephi, it is the tree that is beautiful, not the building (1 Nephi 11:8).

Symbols of heavenly buildings seen in vision are not unique to 2 Esdras, but are also found elsewhere in Jewish literature.

49 Ibid., 156.
When Ezekiel saw the future Jerusalem temple in vision, an angel showed him the measurements of "the building" (Ezekiel 40:5; 41:12-13, 15; 42:1, 5-6, 10). Among other things, Ezekiel described the "height" of the house and the "foundations" of the side chambers, which were "a full reed of six great cubits" (Ezekiel 41:8). Or we might compare the Tanners' parallels with 1 Enoch. In a vision Enoch was shown several impressive buildings standing in the clouds. One of these was a frightening building that Enoch described as "a spacious habitation," made of stones of crystal and engulfed in fire. "When I entered into this dwelling, it was hot as fire and cold as ice. No trace of delight or life was there." Then Enoch says, "And behold there was another habitation more spacious than the former, every entrance to which was open before me, erected in the midst of a vibrating flame." This building contained the throne of God and "so greatly did it excel in all points, in glory, in magnificence, and in magnitude, that it is impossible to describe to you either the splendour or the extent of it." Other examples could be mentioned also.

If Lehi's "great and spacious building" (1 Nephi 8:26) was not derived from the Tanners' apocryphal source, then where did it come from? Lehi seems to be familiar with the symbol and, in contrast to other symbols in the dream, Laman and Lemuel do not ask Nephi what it means, implying that they know already (1 Nephi 15:1-36). A more likely relationship can be found in sources that would have been known to a man like Lehi. When Solomon was king he undertook an ambitious building program. In addition to the temple, he constructed a large palace (1 Kings 7:1-12). This palace complex, which was adjacent to the temple proper, was built largely of cedar (1 Kings 7:2-3, 7, 12). Not only did the palace serve as the royal residence, but it also contained other notable features. One of these was the so-called "house of the forest of Lebanon," which featured several rows of high columns carved from cedar (1 Kings 7:2-5). For Isaiah, the cedars of Lebanon were a symbol of pride (Isaiah 2:12-14). Likewise, the building of Lehi's dream is said to represent the "pride of the

---

50 1 Enoch 14:8-25, in Richard Laurence, The Book of Enoch the Prophet (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883), 17-20, emphasis added. The chapters are numbered differently in Laurence's translation. Our numbering follows the newer, commonly accepted numbering found in more recent translations.
world” (1 Nephi 11:36) and the “vain imaginations . . . of the children of men” (1 Nephi 12:18). Another prominent feature of the palace was the impressive throne room built by the king (1 Kings 7:7). Solomon, of course, was renowned for his great wisdom (1 Kings 4:34; 10:4, 7, 24). The building in the Book of Mormon is also associated with worldly wisdom (1 Nephi 11:35). King Jehoiakim, who reigned shortly before Zedekiah, undertook an ambitious building program during his reign in which he appears to have expanded and enlarged this royal palace complex. Jeremiah harshly condemned the king for these oppressive actions. “Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice. . . . He says, ‘I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms’” (Jeremiah 22:13–14, NIV). This great and spacious building would have been an excellent symbol for the pride and vanity and wisdom of the world. Such a relationship at least seems far more plausible than that proposed by the Tanners.

**Jeremiah and the Tree of Life**

Jeremiah speaks of the Lord “who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of waste and ravine, in a land of drought and utter darkness” (Jeremiah 2:6, Holladay). Lehi says, “Methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness” (1 Nephi 8:4). He also describes this wilderness as “a dark and dreary waste” in which he “traveled for the space of many hours in darkness” (1 Nephi 8:7–8). Recalling Israel’s entrance into the promised land, the Lord says, “And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof” (Jeremiah 2:7). Jeremiah describes his own call as a prophet in terms of eating: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jeremiah 15:16). In similar language the Lord answers Lehi’s prayers by bringing him into a field where “it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof. . . . And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my

---

soul with exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:10–12). Nephi says that “the fountain of living waters,” whose source was apparently near the tree itself, was, like the tree of life, “a representation of the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). The book of Jeremiah describes the Lord’s great love for Israel in spite of her unfaithfulness and patiently tries to get her to return to him, but she will not. “They have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 17:13; 2:13), and made a leaky cistern which cannot hold water and have also sought after inferior sources of water that will not bring them peace (Jeremiah 2:18). In the visions of Lehi and Nephi, there is another “river” or “fountain” that is “filthy,” whose source comes not from the tree, but elsewhere (1 Nephi 8:13, 19–20, 32; 12:16; 15:26–29). “As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness” (Jeremiah 6:7).

In Jeremiah, the Lord continually calls backsliding Israel to return to him once again: “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jeremiah 6:16). After Lehi partakes of the fruit of the tree he beckons to his family to come and partake. His wife Sariah and sons Nephi and Sam do, but Laman and Lemuel will not come (1 Nephi 8:14–18). After this, Lehi “beheld a strait and narrow path” which passed along the banks of the river of water and then led to the tree.

A “rod of iron” also extended along this same path (1 Nephi 8:19–20). “They shall come with weeping,” says Jeremiah, “and with supplications, will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble” (Jeremiah 31:9). Jeremiah never uses the term rod of iron; however, he does consider Israel to be “the rod of his [the Lord’s] inheritance” (Jeremiah 10:16).

Jeremiah begs the people of Judah to humble themselves and repent, “Hear and give ear, don’t be haughty, for Yahweh has spoken; give to Yahweh your God glory before he brings darkness and before your feet trip on the mountains of twilight; and you will long for light, but he will make it deep darkness and bring a thick cloud” (Jeremiah 13:15–16, Holladay). In Lehi’s dream, he sees that, after many people commenced up the path,
“it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost (1 Nephi 8:23). He saw other people reach the tree and partake of the fruit, “and after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed. . . . And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. . . . And many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads” (1 Nephi 8:25, 28, 32). “As a thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed.” The kings, the princes, the prophets who have gone after other gods “have turned their back unto me” (Jeremiah 2:26–27; see also 5:5–7). “Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet” (Jeremiah 14:10). “Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up” (Jeremiah 18:14–15). As they have forsaken the fountain of living waters they will perish when the lesser waters fail (Jeremiah 23:10). The people have knowingly rebelled against God “for they have known the way of the Lord and the judgment of their God” (Jeremiah 5:5) but they have broken their covenants and apostatized: “For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:11–12).

Jeremiah bemoaned, “I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me; . . . the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily” (Jeremiah 20:7–8). “The words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers” (Jeremiah 15:16–17). Lehi says that “on the other side of the river of water” there was “a great and spacious building; and it stood as it
were in the air, high above the earth. And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit” (1 Nephi 8:26–27).

We have already mentioned Jeremiah’s criticism of Jehoiakim’s great palace with spacious upper rooms (Jeremiah 22:13–14). We may recall that it was the kings along with the sarim who usually led the Israelites into idolatry and wickedness. When Jeremiah discusses the wicked establishment at Jerusalem he focuses on their pride (Jeremiah 13:9), vanity (Jeremiah 2:5; 3:17; 4:14; 9:14; 13:10), and empty pretensions of worldly wisdom (Jeremiah 4:22; 8:8–9), just as Nephi does (1 Nephi 11:35–36; 12:18), and the contrast between the vain wisdom of the world and the true wisdom of God (2 Nephi 9:28–29, 42–43). It is also interesting to compare Jeremiah’s descriptions of the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 15:16) with the Book of Mormon theme of “feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20). These parallels are not meant to be exhaustive by any means.

Conclusions

A vital test for any theory or explanation is how much it explains. The Tanners’ nineteenth-century explanations remind us of the blind men who tried to describe the elephant. One man, feeling only the trunk, said it was a snake, while another, gripping a leg, said it was a tree. Yet another, feeling the tail, thought it resembled a rope. Each went his way, telling his tale, certain he had it right; some may even have believed them. But their superficial descriptions hardly defined the nature of the beast. The Tanners’ parallels to the Apocrypha, like those provided elsewhere, explain very little about the Book of Mormon. They note a common phrase here, a similar idea there, but like the blind men in our story, their conclusions have questionable value. In past reviews of the Tanners’ criticisms, we have noted certain authentic elements in the Book of Mormon that are not found in accessible nineteenth-century sources. The Tanners have yet to deal with these. Some might be persuaded by the Tanners’ recent arguments, but we think they are groping in the dark.

Reviewed by Ted L. Gibbons

*Norman the Nephite’s and Larry the Lamanite’s Book of Mormon Time Line* is a two-part illustrated work. The first section of 38 pages provides brief descriptions, and, in most cases, illustrations, of the major individuals, groups, and events chronicled in the Book of Mormon. The final section deals with “Sacred Objects” from the *Book of Mormon*, the “Keepers of the Plates,” and some of the individuals and groups associated with the translation of the record. Page 38 is an index of the individuals, groups, and events mentioned.

The descriptions are simple and straightforward. In spite of their brevity, they are in almost all instances accurate. In a careful review of the one hundred and nine summaries offered, I discovered only one with conclusions that might be suspect.

The foldout time-line at the back of the book fills sixteen 4-1/2" by 8" panels. On one side major groups are color coded and brief descriptions of individuals and groups outline the information contained in the book. Chronological dates at the top and bottom show the passage of years. Each description on the time line is accompanied by an actual or approximate date. A bottom row of images and explanations gives contemporary world events. The other side of the foldout gives a more detailed look at the years 320 B.C. to A.D. 40.

Aside from the two concerns mentioned below, the illustrations in the book and on the time line are simple, attractive, and colorful.

Pat Bagley has used Norman the Nephite and Larry the Lamanite in this book to appeal to readers of his earlier works. They add nothing to the content and utility of the work and serve
no other discernible purpose. In fact their presence as line-drawn figures in the book and on the time line are more of a distraction than an attraction. Do we need any more “arm” jokes about Ammon (“What a disarming guy . . .”)? What purpose can be served by having Larry and Norman tell us in the section on King Benjamin that his address is “1363 Curelom Way”? There are twenty-five such illustrations and notations in the book: twenty-five too many. Even those who loved Norman the Nephite, as my children did, may have difficulty appreciating this pointless material.

The illustrations have one other, and in my mind, major drawback. It is this: many of them are clearly lifted from the work of Arnold Friberg. At least a dozen of the sketches are clear imitations of Friberg’s masterpieces, lacking the detail but reflecting attitude, posture, and clothing. In some cases Bagley has drawn them as mirror images of the originals. His purpose in doing this is difficult to discern. Could he have been hoping that no one would notice? The abundant additional illustrations indicate sufficient talent to create original images. He should have done so.

What this volume tries to do it does quite well. Its presentation of the major events and people of the Book of Mormon is comprehensive and effective. The pertinent question is not “How good a book is it?” but “What purpose does it serve?” Who is going to use it? I called two local bookstores to see where it was being displayed. One had it in the Children’s section, the other in both the Reference and the Children’s section. In format and presentation, it appears to be a book for children. But in spite of the presence of numerous illustrations, including Norman and Larry, it is not. The information and the time line are both too complex. Teens and adults might use the book as a reference volume: “Who were the two Mosiahs in the Book of Mormon?” “What was going on in the Book of Mormon when Moses divided the Red Sea?” Answers to such questions are available here. But how often are they asked? This book will find buyers because of its appearance and author. But it will spend a great deal of time on the shelf.

Reviewed by Elaine A. Andelin

This review responds to a request to look over the Stepping Stone series of Book of Mormon illustrated storybooks designated “My First Scripture Stories,” written by Sherrie Johnson and illustrated by Tyler Lybbert.

Let me first clarify that I make no pretense to academic excellence in the field of literature or composition. I have not been involved in formal education for almost two decades and even at that time my degree was in accounting. However, I will give my opinions based on my current role as a mother and homemaker.

As I reviewed these little paperback books with my children, I found them very enjoyable. The text is clear and accurate, and the illustrations are vivid and creative, eliciting emotion without being overly graphic or harsh. However, I found the text and illustrations inconsistent in the age level they appealed to. For example, my six-year-old son loved to thumb through them and look carefully at the pictures but became discouraged when attempting to read the text. Words such as *wroth, sought, pondered,* and *prophesied* are words he is familiar with but had difficulty sounding out.

My eleven- and thirteen-year-old sons enjoyed the books and spent quite a bit of time “sneaking” into them, but they were somewhat embarrassed to be caught reading “My First Scripture Stories.” My eight- and ten-year-old daughters seemed to catch the little subtle humor clips on the corners of the pages and enjoyed immensely the text and illustrations, but I wouldn’t categorize my daughters as “first scripture story readers” as they are very familiar with the Book of Mormon.

Perhaps it was never the intention of the author to have children read the books. If a parent reads the text while the child follows the illustrations, the experience is positive and successful. But
if they are to be, in fact, "First Scripture Stories," the text is far too advanced.
The three computer software products, Book of Mormon Reference Library (Reference Library), Book of Mormon Studybase (Studybase), and LDS Collectors Library (Collectors Library) bring volumes of Latter-day Saint writings, including the scriptures, directly to personal computers. In many respects, this is much better than having the books themselves: (1) a CD replaces shelves of books; (2) electronic indexing replaces card catalogues and indexes; (3) clicking\(^2\) in the table of contents or on the scroll

---

1. The software products run on PC computers (IBM Personal Computer compatible computers) or on the Apple Macintosh computer. On the PC, each of the three products requires a 386 processor or higher, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, and a double speed CD-ROM drive or higher. The RAM requirement is a minimum of 4 MB (8 MB or higher is recommended) with a minimum of 2 MB hard disk space. The Collectors Library requires a VGA 256-color monitor and video card for viewing the color images and maps and a sound card with speakers for listening to the tutorials and hymns. The Reference Library and the Collectors Library Mac versions require the Mac System 7 operating system.

2. Clicking means positioning the cursor (by moving the mouse) to a designated region on the screen and then pressing the mouse button once or twice.
bar directional arrows or dragging\(^3\) the scroll-bar positioning thumb replaces finding the books, getting them down from the shelves, looking up page numbers in the table of contents, and turning the pages; (4) electronic bookmarks with names replace bookmarks; (5) hypertext links\(^4\) replace cross-references; (6) printing passages of text replaces photocopying; (7) selecting\(^5\) and copying passages of text to a word processor replace typing the passages or scanning them into the computer; (8) selecting text and applying an electronic highlight replace highlighting text with highlighter pens; (9) attaching pop-up notes to paragraphs of text or to verses of scripture replaces writing in the margins of books; and (10) quick location of text passages that contain certain words and phrases replaces long hours of reading and research.

All three products license the Folio Bound VIEWS\(^6\) technology for storing, linking, viewing, searching, and marking the text. This underlying Folio software allows users\(^7\) to read the texts, create and follow hypertext links, search for words and phrases, go from table of contents and index entries directly to the text, and mark the text. Users can find items of text (such as passages of scriptures, excerpts from books, and quotations) with the powerful

---

\(^3\) Dragging means moving the mouse while keeping the left mouse button depressed.

\(^4\) A hypertext link is a mechanism that allows a segment of text (the link) such as a character, a word, or a phrase to be linked to another place in the text called the destination. The link is shown in a different color to make it obvious, and the mouse cursor is displayed as a hand rather than a vertical line or pointer when it is on such a link. Double clicking on a link causes the text at the destination to be displayed on the screen.

\(^5\) Selecting, or blocking, text is accomplished by dragging the mouse pointer over the desired text.

\(^6\) For a review of the Folio VIEWS software see Yael Li-Ron, PC Computing (January 1995): 100. Folio VIEWS is called “A Database and Then Some” and received four out of five stars, indicating it is a very good software product. Folio VIEWS 3.1 Infobase Manager won PC Magazine’s Editors’ Choice award, 7 February 1995. Folio Corporation is located at 5072 N. 300 W., Provo, Utah 84604; telephone: (801) 229-6700.

\(^7\) User is a term in computer jargon that designates people or customers using a software product. I would prefer to say people who are using the software product, but that is too verbose for repetitive use.
computer-assisted searching operations that allow searching of text by author, title, subject, and content.

In this review I will discuss the use of these products, their content, their similarities, their differences, and finally my recommendations. This review concentrates primarily on the Windows versions of the three products even though Macintosh (Mac) versions of the Reference Library and the Collectors Library are also available.

Who Would Want to Use These Products and Why?

Because of their ease of use and the extensive content of Latter-day Saint writings, anyone wanting to become more well-versed in the scriptures and in Mormon doctrine would enjoy using these products. These libraries are ideally suited and, I think,

---

8 When I brought up the Reference Library on the Mac, I immediately found a couple of problems. The instructions in the manual said to double click on the reference library icon rather than double clicking on the install icon. Once I had the program installed, I tried to go to Help from the pull-down menu, but it came back with an error. I was able to run the help file by directly clicking on it from the display of the CD-ROM contents, but not from the program. Then when I tried to select some text to test copy to a word processor, I found that the Copy command did not even appear on the Edit menu. A Mac user would certainly expect to use the Copy command to copy information to a word processor. I was able to export text to a file by tagging passages and using the SaveAs command. I called technical support about the problems; they were aware of them and said that a new version that would correct the problem was in production. They told me how to bypass the problems in the meantime. They said I could merely change Preferences (under the File menu) from Personalize to Full in order to see and use the Copy command.

9 See the review by Larry K. Smith, “LDS Collectors Edition CD-ROM,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 7/2 (1995): 256–63. When I brought up the Collectors Library on the Mac, it worked very well for me. I played background music, copied selected text to a word processor, performed several searches, looked at images and maps, and ran a tutorial. The tutorial contained a spoken explanation along with the moving mouse pointer on the screen, making it very clear how to perform the particular operation. Folio, at the encouragement and with help from the programming team at Infobases, has made the VIEWS operation much more Mac-like than in the past. Rather than the + and - symbols to indicate a nonexpanded level of a table of contents entry and an expanded level, respectively, the common Mac triangle symbols are used. Improvements have also been done to allow Mac-like single clicking in many cases rather than the double clicking required in the Windows version.
indispensable for doctrinal research, historical research, finding answers to gospel questions, preparing talks and lessons, providing interesting reading, understanding gospel principles more fully, satisfying curiosity, understanding the teachings of a particular Latter-day Saint leader, seeing consistency in the scriptures, and establishing a study base of the scriptures and gospel topics.

A major application of these products is finding passages of text and copying them into a word-processing document. From there the information can be printed and distributed or used in a lesson outline or talk. Although it would be nice to have the texts of these three products in a single library, at least they are represented in a common format. Because of this, with some care, swapping of CDs is possible, allowing each product to access texts of the other products. This will likely continue to work as long as the products use the same infobase format.

I had hoped it would be possible to open these products simultaneously as separate Windows applications and then jump back and forth with the switching capabilities of the Windows applications, but that didn’t work. When I tried it, the products malfunctioned and crashed. To be on the safe side, users can run one of the products and then close it down and run another one, all the while having a word processor open. In this way, text from the different products can be easily and safely gathered into a word-processing document, but extra space is required on the hard disk to house the multiple products. The minimum 4 MB of

---

10 I spent considerable time experimenting to see if I could access texts of all the products from a single product. I could not indiscriminately swap CDs back and forth. I had hoped that the software was sophisticated enough to tell me when to put in the appropriate CD, but it wasn’t. I opened the multiple Folio infobases (.nfo and .sdw files) by use of the Open command (on the File menu). I could open .nfo files on the Collectors Library and Studybase CDs with all the products, but I had to open the .sdw files (shadow files found on the hard disk in the Reference Library directory) in order to access the Reference Library CD from the Collectors Library or Studybase. I used the list of currently open windows shown under the Windows menu to jump from one infobase to another, but I had to be careful to have the appropriate CD in the drive as I did so. I found it was best to leave all the windows open during the session and then close them all with the Close All command (on the Windows menu), with the original CD in the drive at the end. For safety, I often saved my word-processing document to disk and did so always before exiting the Folio software.
RAM would not be adequate to cope with this kind of multi-tasking.

Consistent with Brigham Young’s plea that truths from all places pertaining to life and salvation be gathered to Zion, these products accomplish the gathering of much published information, especially concerning the Book of Mormon, in a common digital format.

**Content of the Products**

The *Reference Library* includes thirty-five works (items marked with an asterisk on the box are FARMS publications): the standard works (King James version of the Bible [KJV], Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price), the RLDS Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST), *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, *Discourses of Brigham Young, Gospel Doctrine, Lehi in the Desert*, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, *Since Cumorah*, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, A Topical Guide to the Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1977), *The World of the Jaredites*, *There Were Jaredites*, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (4 vols.) (the items mentioned so far in this list are also contained in the *Collectors Library*), *Answers to...*

---

11 “Gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, to mechanism[s] of every kind, to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever [they] may be found in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, and bring it to Zion.” Brigham Young, 9 October 1859, in *JD* 7:283–84.

I used the three software products to see in how many places I could find this quotation. The *LDS Collectors Library* contained four occurrences. In addition to the one cited in *Journal of Discourses* it is also quoted in the *Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 248; Eliot A. Butler and Neal E. Lambert, “Brigham Young University,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:221; and in Hugh Nibley, “Educating the Saints—A Brigham Young Mosaic,” *BYU Studies* 11/1 (Autumn 1970): 68. The *Book of Mormon Reference Library* contained one reference, found in *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 248, and the *Book of Mormon Studybase* contained no references to this quotation.

12 For the names of the authors of these individual publications (which I have not included because the list is so long), refer to the products themselves or to the product literature. These lists of books are meant to show the overlap and general scope of publications contained in the products.

Studybase includes twenty books in addition to the Latter-day Saint standard works. It does not include the JST. With the exception of Mormon Doctrine (which is also in the Collectors Library), the other titles in Studybase are unique: Mormon Doctrine, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon (4 vols.), Book of Mormon Compendium, A Book of Mormon Treasury (selections from the Improvement Era), The Most Correct Book, The Book of Mormon: Key to Conversion,14 Building Faith with the Book of Mormon, and the BYU Religious Studies Center publications: The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture, First Nephi—The Doctrinal Foundation, Second Nephi—The Doctrinal Structure, Jacob through Words of Mormon—to Learn with Joy, Mosiah—Salvation Only through Christ, Alma—The Testimony of the Word, Helaman through 3 Nephi 8—According to Thy Word,

13 This tape, a $13.95 retail value, contains an overview of the Book of Mormon, including its history, authors, plates, prophets, writers, witnesses, doctrines, and purposes. The content is well worth listening to, but the recording was somewhat difficult to understand because it was not recorded in a soundproof recording chamber but echoed as though it was recorded in a lecture hall. It was a bit disturbing to hear sections of static and silence on the tape where portions of the lecture were missing. It would be nice to have this lecture available in the text of the Reference Library product. See the review by Kay Edwards in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 8/1 (1996): 168–71.

14 This book, The Book of Mormon: Key to Conversion by Glenn L. Pearson, is missing from the list of books on the product package.
3 Nephi 9–30—This Is My Gospel, Fourth Nephi through Moroni—From Zion to Destruction; and Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins.

Studybase includes a utility software program called Lesson Planner/Talk Writer, which consists of a lesson outliner and simple word processor. Additions to the Toolbelt enhance the product.15 In Studybase it is convenient and simple to go back and forth between Studybase and Talk Writer, taking passages from the Studybase library to Talk Writer.

Infobases’ Collectors Library16 is the most mature and extensive library of these three products. It includes a total of 818 works.17 These works include the standard works, the JST, a Hebrew and Greek Bible lexicon, doctrinal works by presidents of the Church, 270 books and 2 pamphlets written mostly by apostles, 15 volumes of Church histories, 13 volumes of early LDS periodicals, 70 issues of BYU Studies, plus 72 books, 13 pamphlets, 143 volumes of Latter-day Saint biography and family history, and 56 volumes of Susan Easton Black’s early membership ordinance data.18 All the presidents of the Church from Joseph Smith to Gordon B. Hinckley are represented with important works on Latter-day Saint doctrine, including speeches by Howard W. Hunter and Gordon B. Hinckley. The Collectors Library includes links to every speech in the library given by these two prophets. Significant works such as Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, and The Miracle of Forgiveness are included. The following classic doctrinal works are also found in the Collectors

15 The Toolbelt is the Folio button bar. Each button corresponds to a Folio function that is executed when the button is clicked. Users can customize the Toolbelt by deleting and adding functions.

16 See reviews by Smith, “LDS Collectors Edition CD-ROM,” 256–63, and Gail A. Newbold, “Gospel Knowledge on CD,” This People (Fall 1993): 26–32. In the latter review, the name of Infobases’ president, Daniel Taggart, is mistakenly spelled “Taggert.”

17 Private communication from Andrew Ehat, vice president of research for Infobases. The 818 number counts each issue of early LDS periodicals as a work. The Collectors Library packaging indicates 804 works, but a more careful counting since then has revealed 818 items.

18 Susan Easton Black, Membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989).
Library: Messages of the First Presidency, Doctrines of Salvation, Mormon Doctrine, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Articles of Faith, Jesus the Christ, The Promised Messiah, The Mortal Messiah, The Millennial Messiah, A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Discourses of Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Mediation and Atonement, Gospel Kingdom, Gospel Doctrine, Sharing the Gospel with Others, Gospel Ideals, and The House of the Lord. Every general conference address from 1899 to 1970 is included, along with BYU Speeches of the Year given in forums and devotionals from 1960 to 1965. I am looking forward to the time when more recent conference addresses and BYU speeches become available. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism is also included in the Collectors Library. Infobases has purchased exclusive electronic rights to The Encyclopedia of Mormonism and is planning to publish any future additions made to this encyclopedia to keep it current.

The Collectors Library also contains 22 maps of Bible lands, the complete Historical Atlas of Mormonism with over eighty maps detailing the history and growth of the Church in the latter days, more than one thousand digitized photographs, and pictures of LDS Church leaders, temples, scenes from the Holy Land, LDS Church history sites, Central and South American lands, early Saints, and other LDS people, places, and things. Finally, the Collectors Library also includes the text and music of 285 LDS hymns.

As a bonus for registering, the Collectors Library also includes sixty-nine volumes of American history, the 1994 World Factbook, and over 12,000 famous quotes.

Similarities

Because the three products use the common Folio VIEWS software, standard functions and similar operations appear in each product. Each supplies richly cross-referenced (hypertext-linked) text. Each shares the powerful searching capabilities19 of the Folio

---

19 The searching power comes from the following internal organization of information in the software. A large dictionary of all the words in the text is built with pointers (paragraph or verse numbers) to the places where each word
technology. When a search operation is performed, the paragraphs containing the searched-for items are called hits. Users can choose to see where the hits occur in the text itself or in the table of contents. Searches can be performed in the entire library, in all opened libraries, in the scriptures only, in a group of books, or within a single book. Searches can be done by scriptural reference, and they can be done within personal notes or within just those passages which have been highlighted by a certain highlighter.

Toolbelt buttons are provided in each product for commonly used operations, such as switching back and forth between the table of contents and the text, switching back and forth between the display of only the hits or the entire text, going forward or backward in the text to the next or previous hit, viewing or not viewing the reference information with each paragraph, and backtracking to the previous places in the text from where links were followed.

All three products allow the creation and use of multiple copies of the libraries. That means that family members can have their own individual copies of the libraries. In their personal copies users can (1) put bookmarks in the text for immediate access to user-specified places, (2) attach personal notes to passages in the text, (3) establish links from one part of the text to any other, and (4) group passages of text together, for example, by highlighting related portions of text with user-defined highlighters.

occurs in the text. If a search is done, for example, for the places in the text where the words charity and mercy both occur, the program goes to the dictionary entry for charity and compares the pointers with those of the entry for mercy; entries that match are kept. The locations of these matches are called hits. The comparison usually happens within seconds.

20 For each individual "copy" a shadow file (.sdw extension) is created and associated with the main library. This shadow file contains the added user information, with pointers into the unaltered main library indicating where the information is associated. This customizes the way the CD-ROM is accessed for each individual.

21 A highlighter consists of a name and text-display attributes. Users may create highlighter names and specify the color and font to be applied to the highlighted text.
Searches using the common Boolean operators—*and*, *or* and *not*—can be composed to find an infinite variety of associations in the text. For example one might want to know which scriptural verses contain the words *Lord* and *praise*, without the words *music* or *song*. Searches can be done for synonym groups of words. For example the search for *beauty*$ (the dollar sign signifies a thesaurus search) finds occurrences of words such as *beauty*, *grace*, *goddess*, *comeliness*, and *magnificence*. Stem searches can also be done. For example, *sing%* finds the words *sing*, *sang*, *sung*, and *singing*. Stem and thesaurus searches can be combined with the Boolean operators. Exact matches of text phrases (phrases designated within quotation marks) can also be done.²³

Each of the three products contains links from scriptural references in the writings to the scriptures. These cross-reference links allow the user to double click on a scriptural reference while reading in the writings and to be taken directly to the scriptures at the point of the reference. After jumping to the scriptures, the user can use the Backtrack button on the Toolbelt to get back to the writings.

The instruction manuals for the products are small pamphlets. Each product relies upon online Help documentation, which is in Folio VIEWS format. Of course the operations and search capabilities of the underlying Folio software can be used to find relevant information quickly in the hypertext-linked Help infobases. Assistance can also be obtained by calling technical support. For each product, I found the technical support personnel to be knowledgeable and competent. They answered all my questions in a timely manner.

With each of the products, I recommend using the following sequence for copying information from the libraries to a word processor. This describes the operation in the Windows environment, but it works similarly in System 7 on the Mac. Cycle back and forth between the infobase and the word processor with the

---
²² This search could be done by the following query: *lord and praise and not (music or song)* or more easily by: *lord praise *"(music|song)*.
²³ Exact phrase searches take more processing time because after the matches containing all the words of the phrase have been quickly found from the dictionary entries, the actual text paragraphs must be accessed and sequentially scanned to see if the exact phrase is present.
Windows Alt-Tab\textsuperscript{24} function. This Alt-Tab function can be used initially to switch to the Windows Program Manager where the word processor can be opened. The following simple repetitive sequence copies passages from the library to the word processor: cycle (Alt-Tab function) to the library and there select the appropriate passage (by dragging the mouse over the text) and then type Ctrl-C (same as the Copy command on the Edit menu) to put the passage in the Windows clipboard; then cycle to the word processor and type Ctrl-V (same as the Paste function on the Edit menu) to insert the passage into the word-processor text at the point of the cursor.

\textbf{Differences and Comparisons}

The three products differ mainly in the writings and in the cross-references (number of links) included. I will consider each product in turn.

\textbf{Book of Mormon Studybase}

\textit{Studybase} includes the scriptures, but no JST and no linking from the scriptures to anything else. The other two products have extensive cross-references from the scriptures and link scriptures together by topics.\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Studybase} has a button on the Toolbelt that conveniently shows two windows side by side, one which displays the writings and the other which displays the scriptures. In \textit{Studybase} the Toolbelt is enhanced with more buttons than in the other two products. These buttons are small and do not include identification text; however, as the mouse pointer moves across these buttons, a "balloon prompt" is shown giving the name of the button.\textsuperscript{26} If it becomes annoying, the balloon help can be

\textsuperscript{24} To use this function, hold down the keyboard Alt key and repetitively strike the Tab key until the desired program name is shown on the screen. Then lift up on the Alt key to jump to that program.

\textsuperscript{25} The Group function is used by the other products to group scriptures by topics. \textit{Studybase} allows the Group function to be used; however, no previously defined Groups are part of the program.

\textsuperscript{26} These balloon prompts could have been programmed to be context sensitive to show the state of the program, but they were not. For example, the
turned off. The modified Toolbelt in Studybase has a Search/Query Box convenient for doing quick searches. The user merely types the query in the box and clicks on the nearby “Search (F2)” button. The user can also click the arrow box next to this Search/Query Box to see previous searches, even those done at an earlier session. Clicking on any previous search string puts it in the Search/Query Box and makes it the current search.

The Studybase Toolbelt allows three quick temporary bookmarks. Using these buttons is simple: click with the left mouse button to set the bookmark, and click with the right mouse button to go to the place of the bookmark. This is convenient for temporarily keeping track of three places in the library text. The modified Toolbelt also has some buttons to aid the user in navigating through the text (to go to the beginning or end of text, for example); however, these functions can easily be performed in all the products by dragging the thumb of the scroll bar. Dragging the thumb to the top or bottom immediately jumps the user to the beginning or end of the text.

Studybase allows user modification of the text inside the program, rather than after copying to a word processor, whereas the other products do not. I much prefer the latter, because it is possible to type characters or delete characters accidentally while researching text. To allow the text to be changed by inadvertent keystrokes is not a good idea. The feature allows the correction of errors in the text, but it also allows the rewriting of scripture. Fortunately, the modifications are only stored in a shadow file, so by getting rid of the shadow file the original version of the text can always be restored.

Studybase includes the Lesson Planner/Talk Writer program. I spent some time learning to use this utility to see how easily it could be used with the libraries of all three products. It required some experimentation to see how the outliner and word processor

prompt for the “Records with Hits” button is the same whether the full text or just the text of the hits is being displayed.

27 In all products, search strings used previously in the current session can be accessed by clicking the Up-Arrow and Down-Arrow boxes in the query entry screen.
work because there was so little documentation.\textsuperscript{28} The outliner facilitates the simple creation of a hierarchical outline. Each level can be easily expanded or condensed with a single mouse button click.\textsuperscript{29} Clicking on an entry in the outline opens that element in the word processor. In Talk Writer the user clicks on the button named Research to go to the Studybase library. There, the user clicks on the Toolbelt Talk button to go back to Talk Writer. To add passages of text from the library to Talk Writer, the user first selects the pertinent text, clicks on the Talk button and then clicks on the Insert button in Talk Writer. It is simple to go back and forth, selecting passages in the Studybase library and then inserting the passages into the appropriate sections of the talk in Talk Writer. This same sequence does not work with the libraries of

\textsuperscript{28} Although there were prompts to follow from the Wizard, I had to experiment to determine how things were supposed to work. There was little information concerning how this product worked in the printed documentation. I was disappointed not to find online documentation, even in a Folio infobase. Prompts by the Wizard technology got me started, and balloon prompt messages indicated the function of each button or menu item on the screen. It wasn’t apparent to me at first that I should type an entry in the typing field in order to have that entry added to the list in the outline window below. (I unsuccessfully tried to type directly in the outline box.) Once I found out where to type and saw that the control buttons allowed me to manipulate the selected entry in the outline window up and down and back and forth between hierarchical levels, it was simple to create an outline with nested section headings. Once I “finished” doing the outline, I didn’t know how to begin. I clicked on the folder icon next to the outline section headings rather than on the headings themselves. Another mistake I made was to double click on the control corner of the outline box to hide it. Then I went to the View menu to Show Outline, and I got a blank outline box rather than the one I had created and expected to see. I also didn’t know until further experimentation that I needed to close the word-processing screen in order to have the Wizard selection available on the File menu. Once the Wizard selection was available, I was able to retrieve my outline.

\textsuperscript{29} A single click is Mac-like and is the way that Table of Contents level expansions and contractions work in the Mac versions of Studybase and the Collectors Library. In the Windows version of File Manager, for example, and in the Table of Contents, a double click of the mouse button is standard to obtain expansions and contractions in the three products. I found myself automatically double clicking in the Mac versions to expand a level in the outline, only to find that nothing was accomplished because, with the toggle feature, one click caused expansion and the next contraction.
other products; however, the procedure outlined above for copying text from the libraries to a word processor works as well for Talk Writer.

Although the Lesson Planner/Talk Writer program is a nice addition to the Studybase product, a user likely has a favorite and familiar word processor. Full word processors, such as WordPerfect or Microsoft Word, which allow footnoting and other advanced word-processing functions, are just as easy to use in copying passages from libraries. Users may also just as easily use the simple word-processing program Write, which comes with Windows (in the Accessories group).

Studybase has tutorials that consist of instructions to be read and running demonstrations. In these tutorials, operations are performed automatically, and the user can see pretty well what to do and how the operations work. Studybase allows its CD libraries (.info files) to be copied to and used from a hard disk; thus other products can safely use these libraries without switching to the Studybase CD.

**Book of Mormon Reference Library**

The Reference Library contains more links than Studybase. Each verse of the scriptures is linked to the topical guide, to topical groups which contain that scripture, and to locations in the writings which reference that scripture. It is like having several commentaries on the verses of the scriptures. All the references for each topic in A Topical Guide to the Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977 edition, are linked together. A double click on a topic or subject heading in the Comprehensive Subject List brings up all the scriptures belonging to that topic. A user can also search the text according to author. The Reference Library encourages users to group text passages only with the use of the highlighter method.

---

30 To jump back and forth between Talk Writer and a library other than Studybase, I found that I could not use the Research and Insert buttons in Talk Writer nor the Talk button in Studybase. Instead I used Copy and Paste functions and the normal Windows functions to switch between the two programs.

31 The Folio software has a Group function for grouping passages of text together. This Group function is used to implement the topical guide, but in the
The entire Joseph Smith Translation of the Holy Scriptures as published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is contained in the Reference Library. With the entire text, it is difficult to find Joseph Smith's modifications easily. Some links work from the KJV to the JST, but none from the JST to the KJV. The user can find some of the changes Joseph Smith made in the Bible by following the links to the JST, but in order to see the KJV text along side the JST text, the user must open (Open command on the File menu) another copy of the library and then display the windows side by side (Tile Vertically command on the Windows menu). This does not happen automatically (as it does in the Collectors Library) and few links exist (compared to the Collectors Library), making synchronization and comparison of the JST and the KJV quite laborious.

The Reference Library contains a number of classic quotations on the Book of Mormon. At the beginning of these, the user is told to press the Contents button for a list of topics, but in reality, this action produces a list of authors, not topics. Compared with the other products the Reference Library contains the least amount of instruction in the printed user's manual concerning how to take passages from the libraries and assemble them for a talk.

Reference Library the user is unable to add passages to these groups or to create new groups.

32 At first I thought there were no links from the KJV to the JST in the Reference Library because at the beginning of Genesis, where major differences exist, I found no links. However, I compared the number of verses in Matthew 27 (chapter chosen at random) linked to the JST: the Reference Library contained only four links (i.e., only four verses in the KJV were linked to JST verses), and the Collectors Library contained thirty-four links! Two of the thirty-four links could perhaps be discounted because the text in both versions was the same (with different paragraphing), but the rest of them pointed to specific differences in the versions.

33 The only mention of this is in the last sentence of the manual. It is in the "Tagging Text" section, which reads, "You can now print them [paragraphs which have been tagged and 'kept'] out, block and copy them, save them to another file, and so on." That is not much explanation to go on. An incorrect inference that a novice user might make is the assumption that, in order to save passages to a file, tagging must first be done. However, the procedure discussed in this section of the manual—to tag various passages, to "keep" them, and then to "block and copy" them—is a convenient way to assemble passages for copying to a word processor. The term block is not defined (that function is more
The Reference Library does not allow the use of its libraries on a hard drive; the other products do. I wanted to copy the libraries (.nfo files) onto my hard drive so that I could test accessing them with the other products. I was disappointed to see a message indicating that the Deseret Software product did not allow access to the text except from a local CD drive. That means the user can't even copy the files to the hard disk of a laptop computer and use the program without a CD drive. It also means a user can't have a copy of the writings of the Reference Library on a hard drive for convenient access by the Collectors Library or Studybase. The alternative, to swap CDs, is awkward and can be dangerous. The technical support personnel at Deseret Software said that they were changing this policy for future releases of their infobase products. I recommend only getting releases which do not have the restricted CD-ROM access.

**LDS Collectors Library**

The Collectors Library has the largest content by far and the most extensive cross-referencing. Their two and a half million links implement the following capabilities: (1) Each word in the Bible is linked to entries in a Hebrew/Greek lexicon, (2) each KJV verse different from the JST is linked to the JST verse, (3) each scriptural reference in the writings is linked to the scriptures at the place of the reference, (4) each verse in the standard works is linked to the appropriate topical list, (5) each author is linked to the author's writings, (6) each topic (including the topics of the topical guide used in the Reference Library) is linked to the scriptures and to the passages belonging to the topic, and (7) all the locations containing a reference to a particular scripture are linked together. These capabilities provide extensive commentary on scripture verses.

The JST text in the Collectors Library contains only the verses that differ from those in the KJV. This implementation is convenient for identifying the changes Joseph Smith made to the Bible, a task difficult to do even with our published Latter-day Saint scriptures, in which the larger JST passages are all together often referred to in the literature as select). Blocking or selecting text is accomplished by dragging the mouse cursor across the desired text.
in the back, but the smaller changes are dispersed in footnotes throughout the Bible.

An additional advantage in the Collectors Library is the Auto Compare feature. This capability splits the screen when a link is followed from a verse in the KJV to the corresponding verse in the JST. Thus both scriptures can be seen and compared side by side. It is unfortunate that no links go in the other direction (from the JST verses to the corresponding KJV verses).

The Auto Compare feature has other advantages. Having the automatic side-by-side windows is convenient in the following two situations: looking up Hebrew and Greek forms of words, and jumping from scriptural references in writings to the scriptures themselves. In the first case, one window shows the scriptures and the other window shows the definitions of the original Hebrew or Greek word. In the second case one window shows the writings (containing the scriptural reference) and the other shows the scriptures. The Auto Compare feature can be turned on or off at any time.

In the Collectors Library, users can add scriptures or passages to existing topical groups and can also make new groups, which can be searched by the topical search. The Collectors Library allows the user to search for passages according to topic or author, and as the user types the topic or author’s name, the topics or authors are displayed. The display of this list changes as the user types, showing the allowable topics and authors with the next one (in alphabetical order) highlighted.

The Collectors Library pamphlet is especially useful because it emphasizes those operations most frequently used. It starts out with a description of how to prepare a talk. It includes instructions for assembling passages of text into a word-processing document. The Collectors Library has the best and most extensive online documentation and tutorials. In addition to a complete infobase, which describes the operation and features of the Collectors Library product, many running demonstrations are also available. These running demos contain spoken explanations, along with the execution of the features. The movement of the mouse pointer on the screen is shown in slow motion. It is like having someone by your side speaking about and demonstrating the product. These tutorials are very helpful and nicely done.
The *Collectors Library* is the only product to include the text and music of Church hymns. Words of the hymns can be displayed on the screen as they are being played. Hymns can also be played in the background while the *Collectors Library* is being used. By the use of portable laptop computers with sound cards and small speakers, Saints can easily take the music of the Church hymns to congregations all around the world.

**Recommendations**

Each product is well worth the cost for the library contents alone, not to mention the search and text-marking functions, and, in the case of *Studybase*, the Lesson Planner/Talk Writer utility. The purchase cost for all the printed textual materials (books, magazines, pamphlets, and so forth) contained in the *Collectors Library* would be over $10,000, for those in the *Reference Library* over $550, and for those in *Studybase* over $234. Given the purchase price of $99.95 for the *Collectors Library* with 818 works, the average price per work is only 12 cents. Given the purchase price of $49.95 for the *Reference Library* with 35 works, the average price per book is only $1.43, and given the purchase price of $39.95 for *Studybase* with 24 works, the average price per book is only $1.66.

I recommend having all three products in your computer library because of the wealth of information at such a low cost and because some of the material in each product is out of print. If purchasing only one product is possible, I recommend that the choice be based upon the content of the libraries. If the choice is for value, the greatest content, or general research in Latter-day Saint writings and doctrine, I recommend the *Collectors Library* product. If recent FARMS books on the Book of Mormon are the deciding factor, the *Reference Library* is the product to buy.

---

34 By selecting the appropriate option on the Study Aids menu I started the background playing of hymns and listened to the digital organlike music while I prepared part of this review.

35 Private conversation with Daniel D. Taggart, president of Infobases, April 1996.

36 All three products are available for Windows users and two for Mac users.
BO0K OF M0RR0N SOFTWAR0E (ASHTON) 395

(although the FARMS periodicals are in the Collectors Library). If the BYU Religious Studies materials on the Book of Mormon and the Lesson Planner/Talk Writer program are critical, the Studybase product is the one to purchase.

Although the computer is not yet the ideal substitute for books, computers are becoming more and more universally accepted. It is not uncommon now to see students taking notes in school classes on portable laptop computers. These now can support a CD-ROM drive, so the libraries of these infobase products are easily portable. Computers will become more attractive as substitutes for books as the following technological advances are made: (1) vast amounts of information will become digitally available in databases and textbases (such as infobases); (2) computers will become smaller, faster, less expensive, and more portable; (3) the quality of the screen display will increase in sharpness, producing text that is easier to read and higher quality pictures; (4) computers will become more widely used for everyday communication; (5) computers will be hooked up to networks, which will be the source of libraries of information, and (6) increasingly more information will be available only in digital format. The downside is the constant upgrading of hardware and software, rendering existing products obsolete.

Deseret Software has other Folio VIEWS-based products, including The Savior and His Gospel Reference Library ($79.95) and Women and the Gospel Library ($49.95). Infobases Corporation has a number of other Folio VIEWS-based products, including an exciting new product called The LDS Family History Suite which has a $69.95 introductory price. Readers who are interested in genealogy and family history will want to take a good look at this product.

As I was doing this review I was easily entertained as I spent much time following links, making new associations, finding interesting doctrinal discourses, and having a lot of fun in general using these three products. They are a valuable aid for computer users studying the gospel of Jesus Christ both casually and seriously. In my mind they justify the purchase of a computer for their use.
1995 Book of Mormon Bibliography

Books


Articles


Asay, Carlos E. “Golden Threads of the Book of Mormon.” In Heroes from the Book of Mormon, 201–12.


Bateman, Merrill J. “Lehi’s Tree and Alma’s Seed.” In Heroes from the Book of Mormon, 16–31.


Christensen, Joe J. "Captain Moroni, an Authentic Hero." In *Heroes from the Book of Mormon*, 128-33.


Condie, Spencer J. “Mormon: Historian, General, Man of God.” In Heroes from the Book of Mormon, 168–79.


Groberg, John H. “Enos.” In Heroes from the Book of Mormon, 47–58.


Holland, Jeffrey R. “Jacob the Unshakable.” In *Heroes from the Book of Mormon*, 32–46.


Kofford, Cree-L. “Abinadi.” In Heroes from the Book of Mormon, 68–78.

Larsen, Dean L. “Zeezrom.” In Heroes from the Book of Mormon, 112–19.


Matthews, Robert J. "The Power and the Purpose of the Written Record." In *Nurturing Faith*, 89–117.


Nibley, Hugh W. “Figure 6 of Facsimile 2.” Provo, Utah: FARMS brown bag lecture, 1995.


Peterson, Daniel C. “A Scholar Looks at Evidences for the Book of Mormon.” Provo, Utah: FARMS video transcript, 1995 (also available in Spanish and German).


1995 BIBLIOGRAPHY


“Questions and Answers: I’ve been studying the Book of Mormon, but the Bible seems boring. Should I read and study the Bible just as much as the Book of Mormon?” *New Era* (June 1995): 16-18.


About the Reviewers

Elaine A. Andelin has a B.S. in accounting from Brigham Young University. She is a mother and homemaker.

Alan C. Ashton, Ph.D., was professor of computer science at BYU from 1972 to 1986. He was cofounder, CEO, and president of WordPerfect Corporation (1979–1991). He is currently a director at Novell Inc., Fonix Corporation, International Power Technologies Inc., and InsurQuote Inc.

John E. Clark has a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is an associate professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University.

John Gee is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Egyptology at Yale University.

Ted L. Gibbons has an M.A. from Arizona State in audiovisual education. He serves as the principal of Mountain View Seminary in Orem, Utah.

William J. Hamblin has a Ph.D. in history from the University of Michigan and is associate professor of history at Brigham Young University.

Dennis H. Karpowitz earned a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Oregon. He is currently chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Kansas.

Phillip R. Kunz, who earned a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, is professor of sociology at Brigham Young University.

Louis Midgley, Ph.D., has recently retired from teaching in the Department of Political Science at Brigham Young University.

Blake T. Ostler, J.D., has taught philosophy for Brigham Young University, Salt Lake Center. He is presently engaged in the practice of law with the firm of Kirton & McConkie.
Daniel C. Peterson earned a Ph.D. in Near Eastern languages and cultures from the University of California at Los Angeles and is associate professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University.

D. Charles Pyle is currently pursuing degrees in theology and computer science.

Matthew Roper is a senior in history at Brigham Young University.

John A. Tvedtnes, M.A., is senior project manager with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.

John W. Welch, J.D., is the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University and the editor-in-chief of *BYU Studies*. 